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WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT (Complete Novelette
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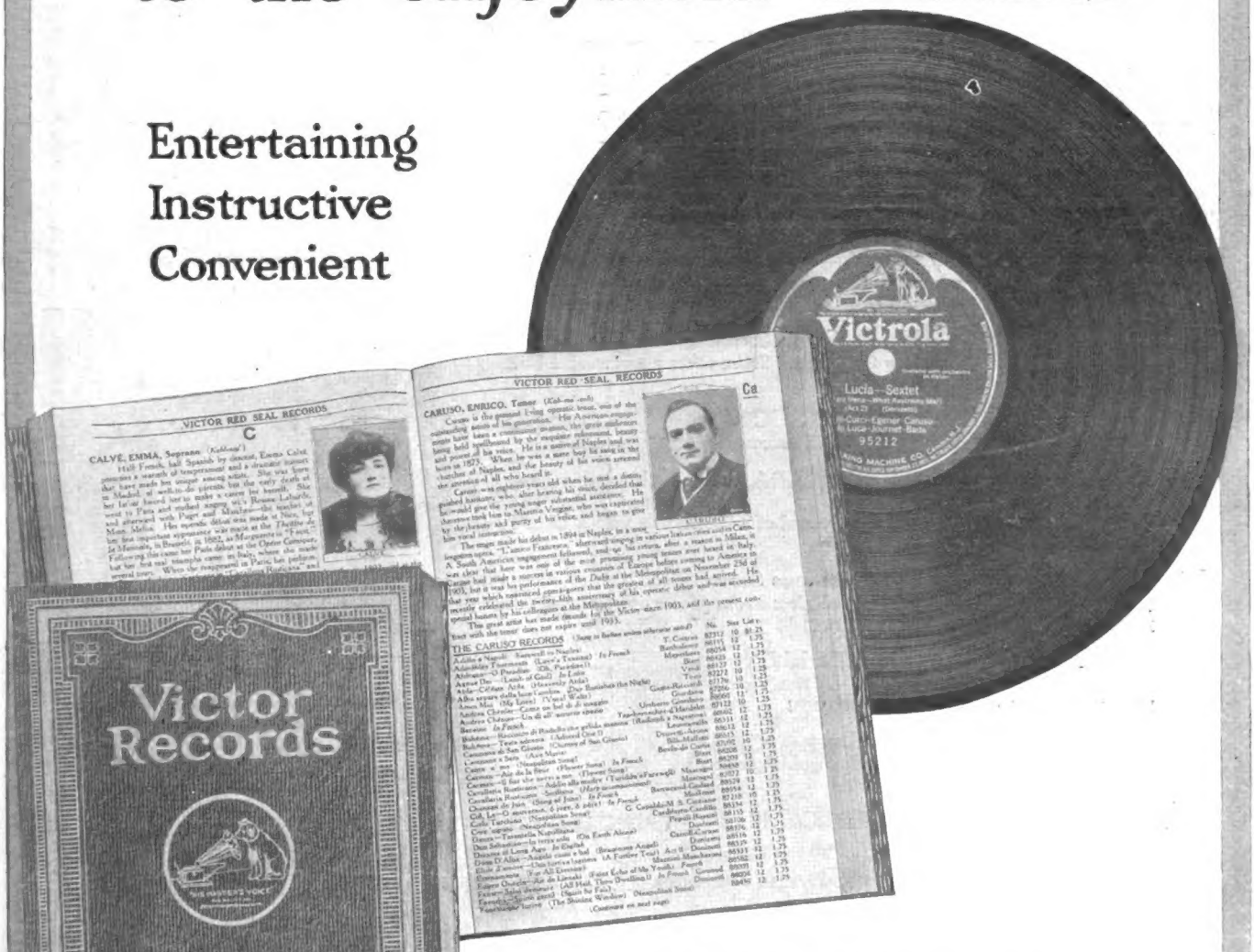

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EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE

Number 1 JANUARY, 1921 Vol. XLIV

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WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT

EDISON MARSHALL

JAMES HOPPER

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With

EVERYBODY'S PUBLISHERS

ONE of the things about our system of Government which constantly astonishes Europeans, is the great interval which follows between an election and the actual taking over of the reins by the Party successful at the polls.

An example is found in the recent election where, by an astounding popular vote, the Republicans were delegated to put in office their candidates, and in force their policies.

In spite of this, it is, of course, the fact that Mr. Harding can not take office until March, and those newly elected to the Senate and the House can not sit until nearly a year has elapsed, unless, indeed, there be called a Special Session of Congress to follow that which convenes in December, 1920.

In other words, there is, under normal conditions in our system of Government, the opportunity for a full year to pass before the will of the people, as registered at a national election, can be translated into fact.

There have been few periods in the history of our country more critical for the welfare of its people than the present; it would be a wise man who would dare prophesy the issue if he knew that, for an entire year, we were to be faced with executive and congressional inactivity, or by open or covert opposition to constructive policies, or even by plain supineness.

For everybody concerned in the business of putting the Government on an economical basis and its people in the way of comfortable instead of strained living, there is a great lesson in the fashion in which Lincoln proposed to meet the possibility of a similar situation in 1864.

In the summer of that year, and even in the autumn, Lincoln, who had been renominated for his second term, was told by his closest political advisers that McClellan's chances of defeating him were excellent. So impressive did these reports become to Lincoln that on August 23d he wrote a resolution upon a paper which he folded so that it might not be read. This he presented to each member of his Cabinet in turn, asking that they endorse it unread, with their signatures. They did so and Lincoln sealed the paper and put it away.

After his reelection in November, Lincoln brought this curious document with him to a Cabinet meeting and reminding the members of the Cabinet of the circumstances of its preparation, read its contents to them. They ran thus:

> "This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be reelected. Then it will be my duty to so cooperate with the President-elect, as to save the Union between the election and the Inauguration, as he will have secured his election on such ground that he can not possibly save it afterward."

Lincoln explained that if defeated at the polls he had intended to go to McClellan and say frankly that the election having shown McClellan stronger and with more influence than himself, he was prepared to cooperate in saving the Union, especially in the vital need of securing a great increase in recruiting—sufficient to provide victorious armies.

There is, of course, a marked difference between that crisis and this, but the same spirit of cooperation determined upon by Lincoln, in spite of his personal feelings, could, if manifested in works by the Administration and by members of both political parties in Congress, ease the intolerable burden now borne by everybody.

No person and no Party should block early agreement in the present Congress, upon the form of our participation in the settlement of the war's political problems and the formation of a policy for the readjustment of this country's finances. It will take the wisest minds in our country to devise the best way out of both of these mazes, and we believe that upon every one who neglects, interferes with or delays the prompt working out of these problems, will be visited the wrath of our whole people.

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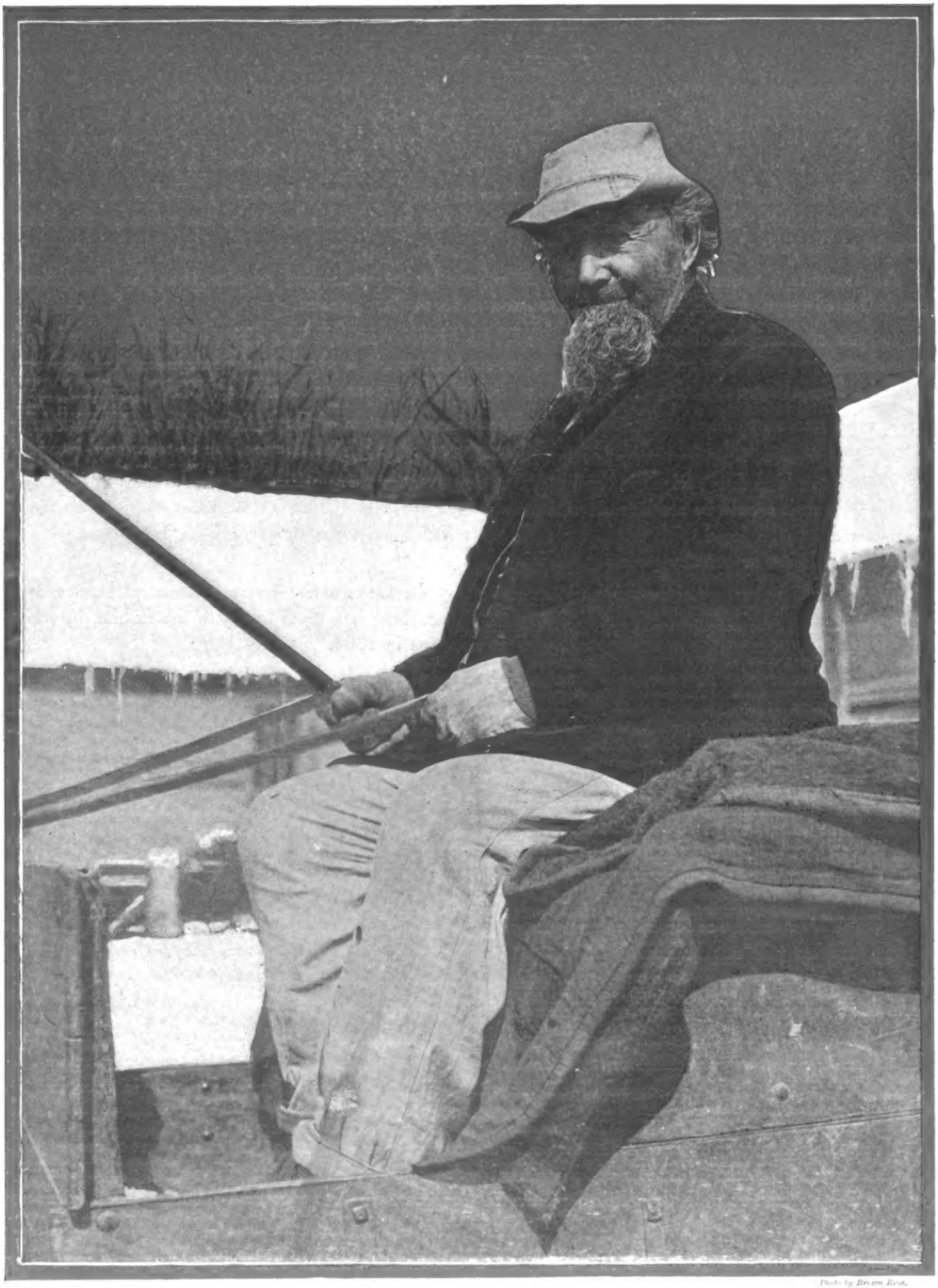

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"Mornin', neighbor—Happy New Year!"

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Everybody's Magazine

NUMBER ONE JANUARY, 1921 VOLUME XLIV

Done in Africa

A Novelette Complete in this Issue

By Will Levington Comfort

Mr. Comfort excels in conveying the fascinating color and glamour of picturesque corners of the earth and writes understandingly of the lure that draws the white man to far places. This time it is Abyssinia, that little known section of equatorial Africa where the primitive fighting instinct of semi-savage peoples is edged with religious fanaticism when Christian and Moslem clash. There is action aplenty, and a delightful romance flowers in the heart of the thirsty desert where a handful of Americans suddenly find themselves in the thick of a fierce native tribal war.

Part I

MAUNSELL was doing two things all through his match with Farquar. It was a culminating hour in amateur billiards, and he was leading his opponent in balk-line play, chiefly because of an initial run. A winter night in New York. Sereno's hall was packed. Blue smoke hung softly over the baize and under the massed white lights. Maunsell was twenty-five, and had been an amateur billiard sensation for fifteen years. A prodigy to begin with; he had brought his natural form to a point of excellence with less study and application than any man of his years, in or out of professional play. Farquar was five or six years older, of the opposite type—a plodder, a student, a devotee. This was Farquar's last appearance as an amateur, though he had no idea of announcing as much in case of losing this match.

Somebody near the table had mentioned Abyssinia. Maunsell was wondering whether Abyssinia was in the Near East or in Africa. There was a smile about it in his consciousness, because he had known once; had been graduated, so to speak, from the geography-thing. He had just finished that first big run when the voice that had mentioned Abyssinia spoke again:

"Little known as the Gobi desert, all that country south of Aden."

So it was in Africa, Maunsell reflected. As the big game went on, he found himself coming up out of the concentration to listen for more. Three-quarters of his points were scored, when Farquar passed him. The plodder had settled and steeled into form. Pale, intense, a trifle awkward, but dangerously steady, he piled up points. Within forty from the end, Farquar lost position and missed a hard gathering shot. A soft fury of applause filled the room as Maunsell lightly rolled the balls into position and began a run.

But now he found difficulty in losing himself. He felt Farquar's mind. It wasn't bitter, nor hostile, but there was a strength about it that prevented Maunsell from losing himself, from reaching that deep inner quiet which is altogether out of the reach of distraction. He felt himself planning shots instead of playing them. This was like a wrestling-match, mind to mind, and Farquar held the balance of strength. One by one Maunsell scored, but each time by conscious effort, and this was wearing him out. For the first time in his life he felt his nervous system, and there was something dilapidated about it—a fabric worn thin in spots. He hadn't taken care of himself, had never pretended to, and here was the first real test. Farquar was better than he was.

He could feel the cue. That meant second-rate performance. One never felt his cue when it was part of him. He saw his hands, the cue-point, the chalk-lines and the three ivories as separate objects, instead of a coordinated whole. He made shots by will-power, and not by that winged inside thing which had never failed before. Finally he failed. Farquar tirelessly plodded on—and out to a winning. Then Maunsell heard his own voice:

"Good work, Farquar. You had it coming. Your stuff smothered me a bit at the last. You put it over straight."

The plodder's eyes gleamed. It was *Career* to him. The thing written plainly on his pale face was: "I have worked years to show you up. It won't be so hard to do again. I'll get the others presently."

Maunsell felt not the slightest reproach for the other, but a deadly hate for himself. His nerve had shown patchy in places. It hadn't come up to the scratch. There was a wreck of pride in him, of a power he didn't yet know himself. No heat about Maunsell's pride; it was cold like cold-pressed steel. He gave over his cue to one of the markers. The fine stick had left his hands before it occurred he might never touch it again.

TWO months afterward, Maunsell was south of Aden, deep enough in Africa to forget it, and making his way deeper, for a part of the way, on a little trinket train toward the equator. Days piled on days and distinguished themselves in memory by queer outward touches—the nasal voice of an English missionary at Abou-Senda; the first night he heard the laugh of a hyena; the first terrible ape-face from a tree—wizened, malignant, and swift to vanish. Hyena-laughter grew into a nightly feature, and the maned baboons became so common, on a certain stretch of the journey, that his eyes scarcely followed the slither of their feet among the branches. It was a wide outdoors, with the roar of a lion occasionally electrifying the smoky twilights. The train left behind; then days of mule-packing and sultry saddle-work, always deeper down-country until he came to Vit-Arebo, the chief town of the Nuani district, and the palace of a king.

It was a thatched palace, but very broad and vast and surrounded by a myriad little huts which the natives called *tokhuls*.

"VIT-AREBO," he muttered, quenching his thirst in the early evening, as he sat in a wine-shop at the corner of the crowded little square in front of the main gates. He wondered what sort of a king was over in the palace, and what he was king of. The thing that he drank was yellow and still and cool; sweet, but not cloying; not particularly heady, but something about it lived on after it was down.

"What is this stuff?" he asked of the black man who had brought it twice.

The long naked one showed his teeth, not vindictively at all, but in a sort of laughing dilemma. He wore sandals, a rakish cut of hempen cloth about his narrow waist and a celluloid collar fastened in front with a hairpin, but no skirt.

Night was stealing into the little square in front of the great thatches of the palace. Cooking-fires were breaking out near by and back among the huts in the tangle of streets. Here and there a whole sheep or lamb was skewered over the wood embers. Blades of all sizes and shapes—a fascination of knives held Maunsell's eyes—knives that were sharp. These people kept them so—and many carried rifles and handpieces. They could do without roasting the sheep, if time pressed too hard. He had seen them carve raw titbits from a fresh-slain bullock, but that was back on the trail. There seemed infinite leisure and laughter in Vit-Arebo. The swinging door of the wine-shop at intervals let in more stuffy-smelling blacks, always armed, always brawly, but with a strange affectionate good nature; bare-legged, bare-shouldered, and a-clatter with knives and lances.

Oil lamps were lit; din increased; the smell of mutton grew heavier and heavier in the hot smoky night air. It was all

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strange as a sorcery to the silent American. He breathed deeper, somehow, than for many days. A song reached his ears from somewhere outside—negro voices that clutched his throat, lifted in a chant. Unmistakably a religious affair, this, a Gregorian offspring, syncopated, but recognizable, with low drawly periods mixed in. This was Rome done over for Africa, with the Desert in it, and the black man's irrepressible melody at the core.

In the silence that followed, Maunsell yearned with a great thirst for the singers to do it again, and though his ears strained above the nearer din for several minutes, all he got from outside was a *muezzin* call to prayer. So the Prophet was here as well as the Pope—followers of the Prophet forever at war with the followers of the Pope. Maunsell turned at the end of long listening to find a stranger sitting across the table; a white man smiling with a kind of nervous bravado at him, under a wide straw hat, yellow-stained fingers drumming the wood.

"Have something?" Maunsell inquired.

"That's the best thing I do."

II

A GUST of poignant joy charged into Maunsell's throat in spite of himself. Everything that he had run from was in that voice—not only the States, but all North America. Here were the home-lights burning across a table, instead of across Europe and a part of Asia. The voice was deep, the drawl of deathless humor in it; the face ravaged, but game. Certainly he had been a soldier; doubtless a trooper, by the lean hang of his shoulders. The wide straw that he wore had the unmistakable tilt of a campaign hat; and the spine was straight, easily so, in a body that had been roughly used. The black, straight, close-cropped hair under the hat-rim did not mislead Maunsell. He would have gambled there was a bald spot above, and won, too. Here was the sort of chap who was ashamed of it, moreover; who kept his hat on when he could. American, typically American, one of the hard-riding, hard-living kind who never grow up and who are a bit dismayed to find their bodies breaking down, though the boy-thing lives on full blast.

Maunsell held up the cup he had recently emptied.

"You can't do better down here," the stranger observed. "Day in, day out, nothing like *tedj*, but a touch too sweet for me. I cake up on sweets. I'm drinking *cahore*, just now. It carries you over the jumps."

Maunsell divulged his name.

"Just dropped over from the palace to look you up," the other went on, easily. "Not many of our kind ramble in these days. Maunsell," he added reflectively. "Old New York monicker, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Me, mister? I'm still using my own name. I'm Dooin."

There was silence. Maunsell glanced up to find the other staring across, his face set and pained, so serious as to suggest a hint of insanity.

"Well, get it over," Dooin said.

"What?"

"You don't mean you're going to slip the chance of your little joke? It's your privilege, all right, even though you take a chance with my feelin's."

"I pass," Maunsell said.

"Thanks, palto, I appreciate that," Dooin said. "Gawd, how I've suffered with these pun-players—" He snorted. "'Doin' what?' they've been springing lately. That's what I was set for from you. Dooin," he repeated. "I don't know why I stick to it. Doin' nothing mainly, and I'm even losing my hand at that. Bill Dooin, soldier of fortune and not. Say, mister, if I should wake up in hell to-morrow morning, they'd give me a batch of red rookies to fork into shape——"

Maunsell watched with interest. The thing called *cahore* was served in a thin bamboo stem. There were bands of well-rubbed silver around the tube, and a little standard made of silver wire. Bill Dooin stared over Maunsell's shoulder.

"Just slipped in for a flash of *cahore*," he muttered presently, jerking himself up from a fit of blues. "*Cahore* from the wood. We're a long ways from where they draw ales from the wood, mister. How long have you been coming?"

"Two months."

"This is a hell of a place. Oh, I say, Maunsell, a man can't drink right, when it comes so easy. A man ain't safe with himself—wine, rum, *tedj* and *cahore*! *Cahore* from the wood—try one."

"I'm not caked up with sweets yet," Maunsell laughed. "It was a thirsty ride and this *tedj* stuff still runs smooth."

"Say, what did you come down here for?" Dooin whispered.

"I don't know."

"Goin' to stay?"

"I don't know."

"Just drifting?"

Maunsell nodded.

"Don't tell the Nuani folk that. Nobody but one of our kind will understand. Tell the natives something they can nail to. I'm the Irish consul here——"

Maunsell smiled appreciatively, but Dooin apparently expected noise from real humor.

"Guess I'll have to try again," he muttered. "That one usually gets strangers. One of the best I have—Irish consul. You didn't tell me if you were going to stay?"

"I don't know."

"DON'T hurry on, Maunsell. You can do something for me. My tastes aren't workin' right. I need to be kept thirsty to get anywhere. Here's everything in the world under your hand, a Texas doughboy's dream of heaven. I'm all knocked to pieces using my self-control——"

Maunsell chuckled. He was beginning to get a line on something that played behind that ghastly seriousness.

"Stick to me and you'll associate with princes, palto," Dooin went on. "Maybe you can do something for little Jasmin. That's the sound, though it isn't spelled like that. Jasmin's the prince—next king of Nuani. Little black boy, eighteen years old, been around some, too. Been up to Port Said and Smyrna. Talks English with a slight spray. Is your nerve good right now?"

"Yes; why?"

"This subject's hard to bear."

"What subject?"

Dooin flicked down a further jolt of *cahore*.

"That boy's morils. It hurts me—yeh, it actually hurts me—how bad he is. Back among the plain folks I used to have some name for being a waster. I shuffled the cards and stayed up late—all them little ways. I never wore myself out like now, haulin' along self-control every step of the road. But that lad, Jasmin, he's so bad he makes me nervous. What I'd call being abandoned in sin, mister, is his natural state. And say——"

The other bent forward.

"Come closer," Dooin murmured.

Maunsell inclined his head still further.

"He thrives on it!"

"But what is all this king business about?" Maunsell inquired.

"Guess you didn't read the guide-books coming down."

"I can do without knowing a bit longer, if it isn't convenient——"

Dooin hurrumped softly.

"YOU don't hurt yourself with worry about other folks' affairs, do you, Maunsell?"

"My own are complicated enough for the most part."

"It don't take no wizard to state why Jasmin's morils are a discussion in point," Dooin declared presently. "It's because they're spread over a hundred thousand black folks. The biggest king they ever had down in these parts was Barbelix, Jasmin's father. Barbelix died a few years ago, leaving word that Prince Jasmin should take his place. That last was the weakest remark the old man ever made. Jas hasn't any more king-stuff in him than a centipede. Get it straight while we're at it, Maunsell. Old Barbelix spoke and the Nuani folk obeyed. But Jas was only a pretty boy then. Now he's beginning to show his real class and the people can't miss all the signs, all the time. They frame old Barbelix's sayings like the Lord's own, but they're pious first and last, and bein' Christians they hate the Mohammedans. Jas don't—at least, not the little girls of Islam. He's catholic all right on one or two subjects. Never heard he was strong for song, but for damsels and hard drink—his tastes are wide and roomy. Sure as old B. Dooin had a mother once. Yes, sir, we keep the Sabbath down here, and Barbelix's people hate the Mohammedans. Jas insists on mixing with 'em—had his picture taken a while back in a Mohammedan turban and it is getting out. The Mohammedans see to it that copies are handed around. Great little game of war brewing, Mr. Maunsell, and old Shazzar don't trust me enough."

"Shazzar?"

"Shazzar's the regent until Jas grows up. One of old Barbelix's cronies he was. Pretty strong old man, this Shazzar, strong and watchful and savage. You see, Jas falls for me. Excuse me, mister, I'm not braggin'. You'll know how humble and contrite I am, saying this, when you know Jas; but he insists that it is his princely right to have me to play with, and Shazzar's got the idea that I'm one of the immoral influences. I'm cuttin' this monolog. Where are you staying to-night?"

"I hadn't thought."

"Bring your saddle-bags over to my *tokhul*, Maunsell. You can't do better. I need you bad. I'm sick with strain controlling myself. Something about you I seem to brace myself against. Just one more little gas-jet of *cahore* and we'll go."

They passed wooden gates, entering a vast rectangular courtyard, a patio large as a plaza, stables at one end, royalty at

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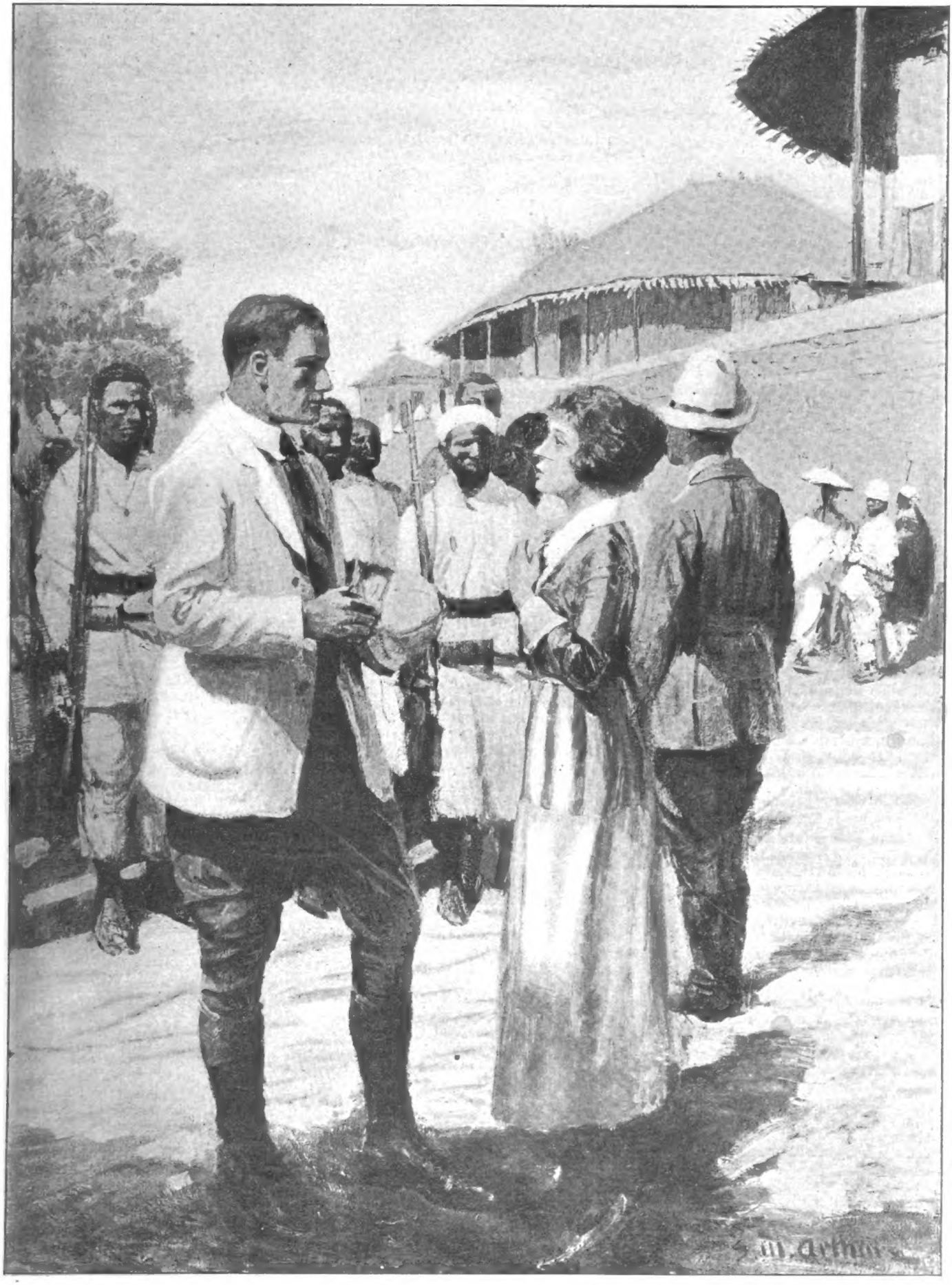

There was joy deep in Maunsell's heart as he listened to Dooin's voice hammering the manual of arms into his dusky platoons. He turned to find the black-haired girl standing just behind.

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the other, and scores of doors on either side for guests and servants. Bill Dooin entered his quarters by one of these doors. The first thing Maunsell saw, as a black man arose in the dark to turn up the lamp, was a McClellan saddle swung over a chair-back, well-worn seat and fenders, all the under straps and stirrup-leathers softened with fresh oil. Then his eyes roved to a pair of modern German repeating rifles, a row of riding-boots, an open-chimney fire. Dooin repeatedly sent the black man out to cool himself in the courtyard, reiterating that he cared to cook supper for two with his own hands.

"Three times this week I've let him cook supper his way," he explained, "and it's a quick finish for B. Dooin if he sinks into a sybarite like friend Jas. I'm tellin' you, mister, there's a man for each boot down here. These black boys just fawn on a white man to help him dress. Can't keep them still, from polishing, scouring, and making your bed with frills. I wasn't brought up right for a *valet de chambre*. I wear down under all that. A horse and man-blanket, an army cot, some bacon, beans and coffee, and the rest that I pack is a plotting thirst. Down here a man has to fight to wash his own tincup; their feelin's are hurt if you fry your own eggs. But it's up to us what we *consammie* to-night. Supper Abyssinia or Texas?"

"I had a lot of Abyssinia on the way down," Maunsell said. "I could do with Texas to-night."

Dooin whistled, staring at the other in surprise.

"That's the first stir of life I've got from you, young man, the first, and I like it. Texas it is. Lem'me do it alone. I'll get you a bucket of rain-water and you tidy up, while I cook coffee and pare off a few sheets of bacon to go with the beans. Beans, mister? I rise to say so. Not red beans, not blue beans, not spotted beans, but little old white army beans, worth a dollar a throw down here. We have got a crockful on the ash."

III

MAUNSELL drifted off with a laugh on his lips that night. He had found something. It was vague yet, but moment by moment he was less inclined to push on from Vit-Arebo. There was something left in him which loved the fairy-tale quality of it all to-night. This big shadowy courtyard was the heart center of a vast Abyssinian business. He heard the bang of the big wooden gates from time to time and saw the shadowy sentries there and others lolling up and down. A half-hundred ponies were loose in the enclosure; and hived somewhere at the big end of the thatches a prince, a prime minister, at war with each other, and a harem, heart-full. The white man's eyes roved around to the strange red gleaming doorways from whence came the sound of women's voices and low laughter.

The ponies foraged quietly, or lifted their heads softly to answer to strange nickerings outside the walls, sounds they heard above the din of the psalm-singing, sheep-slaughtering human horde. It had been deeply complicated at first, but an hour or two after supper with Bill Dooin had straightened it out. The prince was going wrong, perversely wrong, making monkeys out of his own people, according to Dooin; making overtures to the Mohammedans, the one deadly crime to the Christian tribes whose delegates were massed to-night around the palace. It wasn't like this always. These people didn't spend many nights in mutton gorges like this, but hundreds of hill people had come in to-day. They were restless, like angry bees. Old Barbelix's word was sacred to them, but this son of his was becoming profane.

Maunsell awakened instantly in the night, when a hand touched him. The open door to the courtyard showed the pouring moonlight there. Bill Dooin, sitting up in the next cot, reached across and gripped his shoulder a second time.

"Listen," he whispered.

It was like a low sustained roar and the thud of heavily falling water. Maunsell slowly realized after a few seconds that this was from human voices and that the passion back of it was cold, angry, utterly African.

"IT MEANS a killing," Dooin muttered. "Gawd, how much of a killing?"

Maunsell knew he was right, somehow; that this insane hum meant massacre. It was crueler than anything in nature, because it was man-made. Presently, Maunsell realized why it hurt him particularly, and why he knew something of what was going on. One night in a Southern town of the States—a lynching in the streets! The lynchers were white men and these were black, but there was a kindred mob-element between the voices.

Dooin was drawing on his boots.

"Can I help, do you suppose?" Maunsell asked languidly.

Dooin chuckled.

"It takes more than a gravy spoon to stir you up, eh, palto? You're growing on me. No, lie still. It'll all be brought here—what has happened. Everything comes sooner or later to this courtyard."

Dooin slipped out, however. Presently there was a hubbub of voices at the big gates—native talk, much to tell. Doors opened and shut around the entire enclosure; the ponies were massed now at the far end by their own impulse; black figures hurried across the moonlight to the gates. Dooin didn't appear for a half-hour.

"Another funny story," he muttered, entering. "I don't get used to the religious way these folk work. They've just murdered eighteen Manetikans at the far end of town——"

"Manetikans?"

"That's the name of a tribe of Mohammedans up toward the French coast. Herded 'em up just now and knifed 'em quiet for one long time."

"What about? They didn't merely wake up in the night and go about—" Maunsell began.

"Two runners just came in from the border with the word of massacre there—that the Manetikans had done up a dozen or so Nuani herders. The runners shouted their story as they came into town. Vit-Arebo is restless anyway to-night, and started in to collect indemnity out of a few innocent Manetikan traders, before they had any orders from the palace. Also, the Nuanis at the border have caught the Manetikan murderers and are bringing them in, according to the runners—but that didn't prevent the massacre to-night."

Dooin's voice lowered: "Little Jas has been sending flowers to the Manetikans," he added, "and sending eunuchs over to bring back Manetikan women. That and the turbaned photograph——"

He ended with an inimitable hurrumph.

"I got that from the elephants," he said quietly. "Takes a lot of practise——"

"You were talking about the turbaned photograph, and these Vit-Arebo folks being restless."

"They'll forget everything I taught them, if they go to war," he explained. "I've spent months on the manual of arms—teachin' 'em war as she is fought up yonder, but our Nuanis will forget all that in a pinch—carve up their enemies at first hand in their time-honored way."

Maunsell was listening to a white man's voice farther down the court-yard, a tireless whine about it. A woman's tones answered—bitter, on the verge of breaking. Bill Dooin explained that the solitary American missionary of Vit-Arebo had brought his wife and girl to the enclosure, having become "loco" about the murders. It was now after midnight. Vit-Arebo and the palace courtyard were composing for sleep again. Maunsell lay very still, wondering where he had heard something like that voice. Yes, it was the Englishman at Abou-Senda, and that made him think of the first time he had heard hyena-laughter in the desert on the way down from Aden.

The American missionary family was slow to subside. Bill Dooin droned in soft snoring rhythm, the voices in the doorways seemed to withdraw farther in, the tones drawly and more gentle. The sounds in the city outside the enclosure lapsed and diminished like a slowly departing caravan. Just as all nature lifted a hush from the ground to meet and lock with the low-hanging night, the American missionary would arouse to his plaints again—the articulation tireless and nasal, the pulpit habit not be to broken for mere domestic use. Then the broken-nerved woman answered in bitterness.

MAUNSELL awoke to day already burning, and was startled almost immediately by the sound of voices from the missionary's family. Their door was the third to the right. A native was bringing them water now. A woman with draggled hair followed the native water-carrier out, spoke sharply and vanished again. The missionary's whine came forth from within. It seemed raised against all creation. Now a young woman appeared in the doorway, black hair hanging in two broad braids; face very white in contrast and very fired in the morning light. She sat down upon a low saddle-rack, her back to the door, and stared steadily afar off.

Bill Dooin had disappeared somewhere, his blankets already folded. Maunsell stirred up his bags for the shaving-kit, used it, and returning to the door, found the girl still sitting on the saddle-rack, still staring afar off.

"I should think she would," he muttered.

The profile was very good, especially he liked the throat and chin, so clearly defined now, because her face was lifted. She didn't seem to mind the morning sun upon her bare head, and yet this couldn't have been a habit, because her face was so white. It was one of the whitest things he had ever seen, not sickly at all, but so clear and so opposite to everything else in Africa. That was the point of its effect, perhaps

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They came to a halt and several sat down in exhaustion, a painful adjusting of chains along the full length of the line.

because even white men are tanned deep in the desert sun, and Africa's own are the black faces of the world.

Bill Dooin came in, banished the native who almost clung to help with the morning meal, and began to stir flapjack batter to suit himself. A swift affair, that breakfast. Gray embers became red-tipped under the first sweep of Dooin's straw hat, and the bacon grease lost all its bland poise on the pan in a swift succession of frantic sputters.

"Just stole across the street for a snook or two of *cahore*," he confided. "I suppose you're too decent to drink in the morning. I've got a suspicion that you're decent, anyway."

"Does it hurt you?"

"Only by contrast," the other sighed. "The one help I get in that way is to compare myself to little Jas. We'll stroll over, presently, and see his nibs, before we're sent for."

"We?" Maunsell asked.

Dooin flapped his pancake deftly and turned up to the other with one eye closed.

"Unless you're drifting on——"

"The first time in two months I've felt like staying anywhere is right here," Maunsell said quietly.

Just then there was a haze in the room and the big ex-trooper was standing in front of him. Maunsell had a quicker eye than most men, but he had missed something between Dooin's figure bending over the fireplace and the same standing in front, gripping his hand.

"I was nervous for a minute," he said. "I'm not asking what you are, or what you have been, or what you're going to be. Only, I liked it here in the dark last night—liked it coming in and out—with you lying next and so quiet. That ain't all *cahore* talking, either."

Maunsell glanced out the door again. She was still sitting there, only the braids were caught up and coiled. The effect was different, but not less calling.

"I like it, too," he muttered.

Maunsell walked the room with a cup of hot coffee in his hand, listening.

"You wouldn't think it," Dooin was going on. "It's quiet as a pasture outside—all the hill men gone, all the coast men gone, little Vit-Arebo down to business again this morning, shy and innocent as ever. Why, London couldn't take a dozen and a half murders in one night like that. New York herself would be nervous over her breakfast if the morning papers turned up a feature like ours. It'll all be quiet for a few days now, and then the Manetikans will make another move and our Nuanis will crowd closer for some word from Jas. The point is, Abyssinia's got a clot on her brain. You've landed in the center of things, just about as that clot is going to break. It's a fightin' clot, palto, and fightin' down here is a series of close-ups all the way!"

IV

FOR Maunsell, the calender had been pushed back half a thousand years. Here was medievalism at its highest notch of romance; only it wasn't Europe exactly. The big curves of the Nile were in the original gleaming simitars of Nuani. Africa had ways of her own, ways slow but certain. There was fascination about it all to the man fresh from the top crusts of civilization. Everything meant fighting. The ringing stamp of the ponies, now pressed along the narrow lines of shade, had been the same on the plains of Jericho and Troy—the same theme all the way—the big battle theme that never stops, battle in and out a man's soul through all a man's world.

There was joy deep in Maunsell's heart as he listened to Dooin's voice hammering the manual of arms and the first tricks of his ancient profession into his dusky platoons. He turned to find the black-haired girl standing just behind. He heard her question, but it didn't register as quickly as something from her face. He saw—*aloofness*. That didn't express it exactly, but as much as any single word could. Her hopelessness of ever being understood had grown into an actual expression, at least for his first driving glance. Misery, loneliness, apathy, all these had a part, but none was fixed.

"My uncle, Mr. Titcomb, sent me to inquire if you thought it safe for us to return to the vicarage to-day?"

"If *I* thought — you mean, if my friend——"

She shook her head. "He has already asked Mr. Dooin. He wished me to ask your opinion."

"But I've just dropped into Vit-Arebo. It is all a blur to me yet. Dooin says a lot of action is brewing — What makes you so

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She stepped back from him, the dullness of all days hardening to tiny black points in her eyes.

"I hadn't the slightest idea of being fresh," he added quickly. "It was a queer thing to ask, but I only hoped you weren't ill."

They stood facing now without words.

"Then I'll tell him you haven't an opinion?" she said at last. "He wished to weigh it."

"That would be best," Maunsell answered.

Now he was watching her as she walked back to her door. Not the faintest trace of weariness in her movements at least; lithe, slender, a sort of cool, unhurried grace. The semblance of the braids was now lost in the intricate later fashioning of the dark masses of her hair. At least, Reverend Titcomb was only her uncle. That was the most important present drawing to Maunsell. He really wanted to know how long she had endured the missionary house, and if that was the whole cause of her look of suffering. Bill Dooin's black rookies filed out of the courtyard.

"He's up and dressed," the trooper said quietly. "We've just got time for a touch or two—across the street."

"Up and dressed?"

"Little Jas. He's heard about you, mister. He allows he'll look you over this morning."

From the instant the low wide red door under the main thatch was passed Maunsell entered a different world. The palace interior was dim and sweet—too sweet, as if orange groves thrived in the shadows without light, without a stirring breeze. Walls and halls seemed penetrated with this age-old sweetness, a faint humidity being the marked difference from the outer air. Yet it was all surprisingly clean, and here and there through the dense shadows white-robed servants stood. The doors glided open before them and shut as softly. An old black man led the way, his shaven skull gone white, his back bent, head sunken in hollows made by his wide high-held shoulders.

Now Maunsell stopped short. Something turned over within him as completely as if he had heard conspirators talking about his death. A door had opened ahead into a place of vivid lamplight. The sound he had just heard was the click of billiard balls.

MAUNSELL saw the table before he saw the prince—a vast English affair, of a size that made the balls look small. A new table, perfect of its kind; it even looked true in its set-up to the eye that enfolded these affairs with an almost superhuman accuracy. The place was hot from lamps. The prince was at play alone. Maunsell thought of a black saddle-pony with glistening coat. There was actually a dappled look to the fat, round arms. The hands that held the cue were ridiculously small, chubby, a bloody gleam under the highly polished nails. Yes, Jasmin was like a show pony, in the utmost fulness of form, even to the high crest of flesh between the shoulders and the round diminutive head. He was making queer sounds of joy to himself as he knocked the balls around, paying no attention, so far, to the white men who had entered.

"The newest plaything—just down from Aden," Dooin whispered, as the prince went on with his absorbing practise.

Only recently Maunsell had begun to forget how Farquar had whipped him that last night. He didn't feel yet quite ready for this sort of thing.

"A German mechanic came down with the table to set it up," Bill Dooin went on. "Jas wanted to have him scalped because he wouldn't stay and play with him. All my billiards is barroom pool, but I've had to trot out my art every morning. What have you got in this line?"

The face of the prince came around to them just then. He was on tiptoe, his body leaning across the baize. The cue slowly sunk to the table. They saw his dim smile. A superb little animal, overly fat. So much the white man caught first in the strong light; then an ugly suggestion in the softness of the whole set-up. Jas straightened up, trotted to the rack and drew out two extra cues. One he thrust into Dooin's hands, and pressed the other upon Maunsell.

"You play," he said with a lisping laugh.

Maunsell had a fight on in himself. His pride seemed to work both ways, but the stronger end was to stay off. A servant had taken his helmet. He stood moveless for a moment, the taper-end of the cue in his hand.

"Better had," Dooin whispered. "You don't have to be a wizard in this class."

Still Maunsell didn't move. The prince back at the table set down his cue again and trotted to him, pulling him forward by the elbows like a child.

"You play," he lisped again. "Play now."

DOOIN jerked a furious nod to him over the prince's back, and Maunsell closed in to the table. Against his will, there was a joy in his whole being to let the old game work again. Jas hissed and roared softly, making unheard of leaky sibilants, losing his robe entirely, and leaping up and down in his tightly bound chamois slippers. Bill Dooin whistled a bit at first; then breathed audibly, steadily, as the night before in the dark, a look of keen reproach in his eyes, as Maunsell ran on and on in open play. He need never have stopped, so far as dropping a point was concerned. When he finally gathered the balls from three corners into the fourth, and made them ready for indefinite scoring again, he set down his cue with a laugh. Jas embraced his knees and thrust the cue back into his hand. It was hours before Maunsell escaped.

Bill Dooin had a lamb roast on the open grid.

"You don't diminish none on acquaintance, mister," he remarked, looking up sideways, one eye shut, "and to think I treated you careless-like last night. I'm sure getting coarse not to know a white man when he strolls in."

Maunsell chuckled.

"You just handled it right, Bill, to keep me from moving on this morning. It couldn't have been done better."

The other's doleful look did not lift.

"Coarse and rancid," he repeated. "Old B. Dooin's run down considerable——"

Now the big gates opened under the thatches and they heard the clank of chains. Twenty-odd natives, naked, except for their loin-cloths, haggard, gray-faced, covered with dust, were led into the courtyard. They came to a halt and several sank down in exhaustion, a painful adjusting of the chains along the full length of the line. Dooin crossed to them, and returned to announce:

"They're Manetikans—said to be the outfit that murdered the Nuani herders a few nights ago. It's all up to little Jas right now. They've brought the prisoners in for him to see 'em die. He'll choose the way to send them ever. Hell, isn't it?" Dooin went on softly. "Oh, they're not booked for no safe and easy passage. They'll pull it off right here in the enclosure, too."

V

SOMETHING opened up inside Maunsell. Some pent thing had broken. He was closer to life than ever before. It had something to do with Bill Dooin, and the prince, and the black-haired girl. Most of all, perhaps, it had something to do with the silent chain-gang, waiting for death in the enclosure. Twenty-two dusty, wasted black men yoked together neck and ankle with rusty, blood-spattered chains that looked hundreds of years old.

The prisoners bore all grimly. In some cases the limbs were swollen about the ankle-pieces; in others, the flesh was worn to bone and white tendon. They sat in the dust through the burning heat. They asked for nothing, expected nothing. Lights already burned dim under their trailing eyelids, the whites flecked with the gray of utter fatigue. Maunsell had ventured close. Something in his heart roused fiercely to help them.

The cold pride-thing that had driven him mercilessly from the night he had turned over his cue to the marker had diminished absurdly during this first day in Vit-Arebo. Throughout the travel interval until now he had known only a passion to leave New York behind. It was really a passion to leave himself behind—an old self that many had fallen for, that had taken things so easily all the years, so confident of winning, as not to appear greatly interested. Yet he had lived on winning, to an extent that he had suffered a childish shock when beaten and undone at the last. He hadn't been game enough to congratulate Farquar without a shake in his voice. Farquar may not have heard that tremble, but Maunsell had felt it. He had wanted to leave behind that nerveus system also; the thing he had suddenly found to be unreliable in a pinch; the mind and all that went with it that had failed in battle with Farquar's stronger force.

In fact, Maunsell had brought a secret shame into the heart of the darkest continent. Here were close-ups, as Bill Dooin had said. Here was life that could be touched and felt and smelled. The doors had opened. It belonged to him if he wanted it. To his astonishment, he found he did want it; there he had been almost dying for a part in some big moving drama that was only a far rumble or faint intimation before. Was it Bill Dooin, or the black-haired girl, or the chain-gang?

All the journey down seemed suddenly straightened out in his mind; a new meaning to the roar of lions, to the laughter of hyenas in the night, to the malignant faces of maned baboons; new meaning to gourd and knife and lance, to the chant of Christian and the *muezzin* call. All drama

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stirred around these vast thatched roofs. It was still like a dream that he had entered this day, and touched awake the frothy enthusiasm of the red-nailed prince. He walked out of the gates now, to the end of the town. The sun was still high. The desert quivered with heat like a vast iron stove-lid burned gray.

Night fell. The prisoners still sat or lay in their chains. The black-haired girl watched from her doorway. Bill Dooin was cooking supper, but Maunsell didn't want any.

"What are they waiting for?" he asked. "Why don't they put them to sleep—get it over—if there isn't a way out?"

"Jas hasn't got to them yet," Dooin answered. "They brought him a new toy to-day—out of Arabia. Little Jas' has been back of the purdah all afternoon."

Maunsell didn't further ask the nature of the toy.

"Come on to supper," Dooin growled a second time.

"Excuse me, Bill, but I'm passing up supper to-night."

Dooin joined him in the doorway a minute or two later, rolling a cigaret.

"Do I get you straight, that it's because *they're* hungry?"

Maunsell smiled at him, but didn't answer. Dooin said slowly: "They were hungry before you got here. They were hungry last night and the night before. Some of them are past hungry now. Lot o' folks hungry around the world."

"It's the close-up thing, Bill—one of the close-ups that you promised. These prisoners are here, alive, maggots in their wounds. A man can't stay himself, when life comes close as this——"

"S'pose we take a little shot of something across the street?"

"You go, Bill."

"But you can't do anything standing here."

"I've got to do something—if it is only to stand here and feel rotten."

VI

ALL day the chain-gang had been silent, but there were low groans and sounds of strangling in the courtyard now. The grim outfit couldn't help the noise it made in its sleep. A swift rush of steps behind Maunsell. The black-haired girl stood there in the starlight. Her uncle had taken them back to the vicarage at sundown.

"I was hoping—I just ran over before the gates were shut for the night, to see—" she halted.

"Yes, I know," Maunsell said softly.

"Oh, can't something be done to put them out of their misery?"

"Something's got to be done to-morrow."

She drew from him, as if to hurry away.

"I'll walk back with you," he said.

The next day Jasmin wanted billiards early. When Dooin brought the word, Maunsell was on his cot in the shadow. He had slept very little and the sight of the prisoners out yonder in the sunlight added to the great weariness of the day. He didn't stir now.

"Friend prince—in the billiard-room," Dooin repeated.

"Tell him I'm indisposed," Maunsell said.

Dooin knelt by his cot, looked into his face close and long.

"It isn't *cahore*," he muttered. "It isn't rum. Where'd you get it?"

"It's the chain-gang, Bill. Tell prince I'm moving outside the enclosure until he gets busy in their case."

"Bo, dear—you can't be sure of your ground?"

"I haven't thought of my ground. I'm just sore about this chain-gang."

"But Jas is king-stuff, and set for billiards. Why, nobody——"

"It's time somebody did. I've got nothing to lose. I'm not playing billiards until this torture-stuff stops out yonder."

"ADIOS," Dooin said mournfully, as he rose. "It was too good to last."

Four or five men-servants came forth from the big red door with hammers, chisels and wrenches and set about freeing the prisoners from their chains. Dooin hadn't returned, though an hour had passed. The details of the chain-breaking were too atrocious to carry in his mind. Certainly they were not for telling afterward. Half of the Manetikans had to be carried to the water-tanks at the far end of the enclosure. Some were too far gone to drink, but for the most part they sprawled over the pony-troughs and filled themselves like poisoned creatures.

Now Maunsell saw that their bodies were being washed by the servants. Other servants came with lint and covered the wounds. The white man couldn't get the relief his heart craved from the process, because of an icy maze of thoughts connected with these men being prepared for death. One by one they were being carried into the palace, and Maunsell went back to his quarters, where there was a long wait before Bill Dooin joined him at noon. The trooper banished the servant who followed him in. This appeared to be a preliminary to all talk and action in quarters. Bill sank down on his cot and covered his face. The other drew near and waited for words, his habitual unconcern changed to fierce desire.

"Was it too much for you, Bill?" he asked.

"It was a whole lot, palto."

"Is it all over?"

The other sat up.

"Over?" he repeated. "I rise to state that it isn't begun yet."

Maunsell did not probe further. He was thinking now that he had botched the whole affair; that it would have been better for him to have stayed out and let the Manetikans die of thirst and heat, than to encounter this nameless and prolonged torture. The sense of miserable failure was crawling over him again, uglier, and at the same time more subtle, than his failure with Farquar. That had concerned himself alone; this had the lives and deaths of others eternally mixed in. Bill Dooin's eyes were fixed upon him through the yellow-stained fingers.

"Last night you were only a bystander to this Abyssinian side-show," he said curiously.

Maunsell cleared his throat.

"What is it—just beginning, Bill?"

The other sat up. "Jas isn't killing 'em," he whispered. "He's making guests of them!"

"He's what?"

"He's feedin' 'em with spoons; he's put 'em in the spare room; he's got the little *dulce* maidens playing their mouth-organs soft and low."

Maunsell yawned, even stretched a little. Relief, like a delicious languor, stole over him; yet Bill Dooin's eyes bored closer and closer, as if there were no mirth in the world and never had been.

"I guess you don't follow me, mister," he said gravely. "I guess you ain't seeing this thing adequate."

"I'm listening."

"Manetikans are Mohammedans."

"Yes."

"These Manetikans murdered Nuani herders—Christians——"

"Yes."

"THEY'VE been captured and brought here to be made an example of, and now little Jas is feedin' 'em pickles and sweets."

"It's awful, Bill, but it hasn't anything to do with billiards. That lets me out."

"I'm not saying you get off as easily as that. He sent for you and you didn't come. Then the first thing I knew, he turns this trick——"

Maunsell still smiled.

"He might have taken the Manetikan prisoners in out of the sun. He might even have hurried their cases through, because he wanted a game of billiards, but by no stretch of the imagination could my refusing to play cause him to make guests of his enemies."

"Anyway, our budding billiardist has done the dirtiest insult to his own people. When it leaks over Nuani that Jas has been hanging garlands on the necks of Mohammedan murderers——"

"After that, the big spill," Maunsell finished.

"You've said it, palto, and news travels fast down here in Abyssinia——"

Part II

VII

FOUR of the stillest days followed that Maunsell had ever known. In the early part of the forenoon he played billiards with the prince and sometimes again toward the end of the long days as they cooled a little. The hours before and after noon were spent under the thatches in Bill Dooin's quarters, lying under the big drowsy punkahs and squinting out to the enclosure, where the equatorial day pressed down in all her searching fury. For three evenings in succession he had seen the black-haired girl without encountering the faintest hint of *ennui*. This was deep business for Maunsell. Also he had a curious and growing affection for the Nuanis, right now in the midst of an ordeal laden with grave possibilities.

The extraordinary report that Jasmin was making guests of the Manetikan prisoners was slow to break upon the comprehension of Vit-Arebo. Even though they had come to despise Jasmin during recent months, the Nuani folk could not believe that this was possible. Shazzar, their beloved regent, would not permit such a thing. Still, no one had seen the

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Shazzar had stopped in the renewed violence of the protest—lances and simitars swung high. It was like an old Babylonian picture.

Manetikan prisoners. Certainly they had not been publicly put to death.

Maunsell was at billiards on the afternoon of the fourth day, when he saw Shazzar for the first time. The old man entered under the lamplight, walking on a staff. He wore straw sandals and a one-piece cotton garment, clean but rather coarse than fine. The unmistakable quality of the old man was in himself. The figure was bent with years—but the lean, narrow face was still full of fire. He stood apart from the table, waiting in scorn for the young man to look up from his play. Jasmin toyed leisurely with the balls.

Shazzar spoke. Maunsell stepped back. He did not understand the words, but perceived that the old man had little hope of being obeyed. Jasmin did not appear to notice, but caught Maunsell's sleeves in his two hands and pulled him to the table. The old man spoke again, his voice cavernous, full of warning and reproach. Jasmin went into a fit of rage, pushing Shazzar from the room and raising a helpless outcry, when Maunsell, refusing to continue, called for his helmet. The American hastened forth to rid his ears of the outburst, high-pitched and insensate, from the ruined creature behind.

Plainly the news which Shazzar had brought to the billiard-room had to do with the prisoners from Manetika. Later in the day a delegation of several hundred Nuanis filed into the courtyard. Shazzar appeared and stood bareheaded, with his staff, upon an eminence in the midst of his people. He listened gravely to the words of the spokesman.

"They want the prisoners, but they want more than that," Dooin whispered.

Shazzar now spoke briefly.

In the great silence that followed, Maunsell realized that Dooin's face had turned to his; that it was very close, and looked gray under the tan.

"The old man dares the truth," he muttered in astonishment. "Three of the Manetikan prisoners have died. Ten have been sent secretly back to their own people. The others, not ready to travel, are still in the palace."

Then, as if the Nuanis only just comprehended as Maunsell did, the roar began, voices ranging higher and higher in protest, mouths open wide. Shazzar held up his arm to speak again.

"He says he did the best he could to prevent this shame falling upon his people; that daily he had tried to break in upon the will of Prince Jasmin, but without effect," Dooin interpreted rapidly.

Shazzar had stopped in the renewed violence of the protest—lances and simitars swung high. It was like an old Babylonian picture.

"Some want the prince's life now," Dooin remarked. "All want to be delivered from their oath of fidelity to Barbelix—about taking Jas for king."

Old Shazzar stood silently in the midst of this rising revolt. When there was an opportunity for him to speak, it was very briefly: *From a shepherd boy he had obeyed Barbelix, his comrade. As a young man he had obeyed Barbelix, his prince. As an old man left alone, he could not now bring to his record the first disobedience to the dead Barbelix, still his king.*

Maunsell caught the thrill of it, even before the meaning came, almost literally, from Dooin's lips. He loved the dignity, the integrity of it, even as did the Nuanis, who seemed suddenly turned to stone. Heads bowed, they rendered the perfect tribute of silence—then left the courtyard.

"They're not changed at all," Dooin explained. "Only they'll mill over Shazzar's words for an hour or two."

VIII

SHORTLY afterward, Maunsell was sent for from the palace. The white-haired servant met him in the outer halls, but did not lead the way to the billiard-room this time. Farther on, through the still interminable halls, Maunsell heard lulling music and found the prince on a broad couch beside a perfumed pool. The chubby hands writhed and knotted over the fat face; the moving mouth, seen alone, was without reason or order.

"You stay," he begged, starting up and reaching for Maunsell's shoulders with both hands.

Maunsell was mystified.

"You stay—here," he pleaded, his fingers restless upon the white man's shoulders. "Not to play. No more

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Queer pity moved the white man. Jasmin had found himself alone at last—so utterly alone as to ask moral strength from a stranger within his gates. This startling change must have come from the call of the delegation in the courtyard. Jasmin was afraid now, and he wasn't pretty when he was afraid. All the time maidens in the shadows played softly upon their strings and breathed upon the small reeded gourds—sweet watery notes that one forgot presently unless they stopped for a moment.

Maunsell tried steadily to curb his dislike. Jasmin was always more or less scantily robed, yet the stranger never became used to it. The lean naked warriors outside had a clean, wholesome strength about them for his eyes, but this crying, flitting palace-creature—one had the absurd impulse to draw the covers over. For an hour Maunsell stayed, until the red-nailed fingers slipped from their hold upon his hand and wrist and the child-thing slept. Purple dusk was in the courtyard as he crossed. The sight of Dooin waiting in the doorway was strangely good.

"BUT why does he turn to me, Bill—the poor little chap with a whole palace to draw on?"

"Class, mister, class."

Maunsell chuckled.

"You see, he's cut himself off from everybody, even from old Shazzar. Why, he'd have had me in irons if I'd refused to play billiards with him as you did, but class tells."

Dooin was on his back staring at the ceiling. He blew out a long thin diffusion of smoke and added with a laugh:

"But don't forget old B. Dooin sprung something on Jas just as he was for sending servants to bring you by force, when you wouldn't play billiards the first time——"

"What did you tell him?"

"That he couldn't use force on you, because you were a king in your own country."

Maunsell smiled bitterly. He was looking back at his own years—great stretches of waste in them, secret places of selfishness fit only for scorn now. He thought of the last night in New York; how Farquar, at best a middle-class man, had put him under, brain and nerve, as well as in the game upon the table. It was all war—war in and out. A man hadn't really much right to be shocked at other people's weaknesses, not even at the spoiled places in the poor little prince.

"It was another close-up, Bill—in there with Jas'," he muttered after a long silence. "I didn't know until just now how much I got. I'm going over to the missionary's for a while."

Bill Dooin snorted.

"Yes?" Maunsell said questioningly at the door.

"Here's hoping Jas don't wake up and spoil your call."

On his way back to the courtyard two hours afterward he found Vit-Arebo curiously stirred as he passed through the streets. Faces came up from the low fires to look into his. More hill and desert people were coming into town, but there was no noise, no feasting. The crowds had pressed close into the area before the gates and in the tangle of streets surrounding. The sentries had been trebled at the big wooden doors, though the white man was admitted as usual. His own candle hadn't been snuffed ten minutes before Maunsell heard strange cries outside. A few minutes later the gates opened to let in a party of Nuani warriors with the struggling screaming Jasmin in the center. They carried the prince to the red door and thrust him in.

"Now that's queer they didn't kill him," Dooin muttered. "It must be their regard for old Shazzar."

"He tried to make a getaway, as I understand it?" Maunsell asked.

"Tried to join the Manetikans outside. Poor kid fancies he's stronger with them than with his own people. The Nuanis certainly love his father to let him live."

"And the Manetikan prisoners still inside?"

"They'll get to them later."

The two white men were not settled again before they began to sense the queer expectant tension from the sentries at the gates. Presently they heard the calling in the far streets; then the nearer shouts for Shazzâr. A naked runner staggered in, his eyes rolling, his tongue thick with exhaustion. The sentries carried him to the red door, which was opened immediately, for the old regent to emerge in the midst of his servants. Maunsell heard the story of the runner—sentences gasped from a bursting heart.

"The Manetikans are coming," Dooin whispered quietly, as they walked back. "Thousands on the way to Vit-Arebo. This is the first of twenty runners who have started in with the story. He's done his seventy miles in eleven hours. He can sit by the fire the rest of his life."

Maunsell didn't speak his thought, which had to do with the black-haired girl. He was wondering if he had better bring the missionary and the women over to the enclosure to-night. Bill Dooin apparently didn't miss what was in his mind.

"Plenty of time to-morrow, mister. The Manetikans can't possibly get here, by forced marches, before to-morrow night. We'll stop them, anyhow, out on the desert."

All through the hours that followed, the gates opened for the other runners to come in. Dooin was up and down through these hours. Maunsell lay still, but not asleep. The big Abyssinian drama was closing in upon him point by point—the big fight-thing in and out a man's heart. Dooin's words of a day or two ago came back to him:

"Everything comes sooner or later to this courtyard."

IX

MAUNSELL was riding in from the desert. It was before dawn, the third morning afterward. The first day of the big battle had been fought. The field was only ten miles away from Vit-Arebo. He was cold. The cold seemed to come up from the ground—up through the pony's limbs to his own. It was more than cold of skin and muscle, but deep to the heart, cold through and through. There was no moon, no stars; sunrise was two hours away, yet there was a gray filmy light around his pony's head and playing along with him close to the ground.

The night was dark and drafty. Maunsell tweaked his own nostrils from time to time—a tormenting jump to a tiny muscle there. It always used to come when he passed a funeral in the street. "If one funeral made it jump for one minute—" he began, and then startled the pony with his sudden laughter.

He was in for a twitching nose for many days to come, because he had seen the dead in thousands yesterday and last night. Thousands. Much as the desert slipped by under his pony's hoofs now, the battlefield moved across his inner sight as he had seen it up to an hour ago. Thousands. No rows of dead. No peaceful dead—no dying for glory. All that was hoax. Maunsell had seen. The field in the coming dark had been like a madhouse, a murder in every room. Bodies lay and sat—torn bodies that up to the last moment had known the hells of fanatic hatred—bodies burned and drained. A score of outlandish memory pictures moved cautiously across his vision as he rode.

"I've got to stop this sort of thing," he said aloud.

He meant to stop the pictures. The pony quickened his canter at Maunsell's voice—a splendid white Persian from the stables of the prince. Maunsell had chosen the stallion when he rode with Dooin out to meet the Manetikans. Man and beast had been on the go a whole lot since then, but both were strong yet.

Now Maunsell saw the lights of Vit-Arebo. The palace gates swung for him. The servant arose from his shadows in Dooin's quarters and stirred the fire. Maunsell bathed and changed his clothes; found himself getting more tired every second. It was not yet light. A shadow moved softly outside the open door. The fire-light touched it. The black-haired girl came forward swiftly—close to him.

"I didn't think they could hurt you," she said with a burst of words, "but after so many hours, I couldn't be sure."

"You heard me come in?" he whispered.

"HEARD you, of course. I have been watching the gate all night—all day yesterday. I waited to give you a chance to bathe——"

"Dooin needed some little things," he told her. "Couldn't have spared three or four hours from the field except for that——"

"They need you so out there?"

"I've tied wounds all night—all day yesterday. Need it! Suppose there was one soldier you could make comfortable and you missed the chance—one man you could save by binding him up at the right minute. You see, you wouldn't miss a chance like that."

"But they don't let you rest—you're burned out!" she whispered.

"I—I've rested all my life. I've never felt any one else's pain before in my life. I've been so much like little Jas' that it's easy for me to hate him. Why, I never woke up, until I came to this courtyard——"

"You're cold," she said. "Your hands are cold.

"It's the fag that goes with seeing so much blood. Why, everything's soaked out there—shirts, saddles, the earth itself—bodies drained gray like moonlight on the sand——"

"Don't talk about it now!"

The black servant was on his knees by the fire. The smell of coffee was in the room.

"Make it strong," Maunsell said for

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the second time, "especially the canteen for Dooin."

"He'll do it all right, and get up the packages for Mr. Dooin. I'll see that he does," she added. "You need only rest. The dawn is coming up. Who'd think we'd be together from night into daylight?"

"They didn't hear you steal out, then?"

"They didn't call, if they did. I would have told them that you had come in from the battle."

She was rubbing his hands in hers, sitting by his cot, taking them one by one and leaving the other covered in her apron. Maunsell chuckled.

"LESS than two hours ago . . . They had been bringing the wounded back to the ruins—the sunken temple—" he was saying. "Dooin joined me—looked like his bones were on the outside. Some man he was yesterday, one more man, all day yesterday—down in the thick of things with his black boys. He's sure the angel of the Lord to them from now on. Said he didn't see how he could face to-day without his coffee, so I sneaked off to get it. Of course I could have sent a servant or soldier, but—last night—at the time——"

Maunsell halted.

"Yes——"

"At the time I've been coming to you evenings—if it hadn't been for the wounded to bind——"

She listened in silence. The next remark was utterly unlike Maunsell:

"He was glad to have me back of him—kept saying it all yesterday and last night when we came together. 'I always feel better, palto, when I feel you back here workin', too.' It was what he said in the morning, after I slept here the first night in his house—said he liked the feel of coming in and out and finding me here. I think he must have been dying of loneliness."

"You love him very much, don't you?"

He laughed. "I wouldn't call it that, yet even that doesn't sound so impossible, as it would before the fighting yesterday——"

"You found so much more in him?"

"Yes, but we were all wide open in the fighting. We didn't have *thinks*, you know. It was *quick* to *quick*—all nails pared down to get the pulse of things. You see a man clear in, through a day like yesterday—thousands of dead and dying about and more falling——"

"You said Dooin was dying of loneliness before you came," she whispered. "We were all dying of something——"

"I sure was," he answered. "I was getting so ingrown that it was beginning to stretch my face——"

"Mine was *voices*," she said quietly. "I died every day; that is, little by little—from voices. I felt if one of them would speak again, I would fall upon them like a big cat from a tree—tear and rend. Then one of them *would* speak again, and I only got more still and stony inside—cold and dead here——"

She lifted his hand wearily to touch her heart.

"It was what I saw first," he whispered queerly. "I seemed to know that thing about the voices—when you first came into the courtyard in the night; and the first thing next morning. Then I saw you sitting out on the saddle-rack. It was stony—the look in your eyes—poor little girl!"

"But it's better since you came—as if I had something to cope with—more to give them. I don't hate so. They don't hurt so. It's more like it was when I first came two years ago——"

"How's that?"

"I was so full of joy in coming to Africa—felt I had so much to bring them—even to bring Africa! Then day by day—voice by voice—all hope and light died, until——"

"Yes, I know. I needed to come just the same for myself. No one else could have done so much, just sitting out there on a saddle-rack. I never get to the end of that."

He raised a little to glance out the doorway. A tinge of red was in the dawn.

"I must go back," he muttered, but didn't move.

She had left to bring a plate of food. He was still staring out the doorway.

"Yesterday at this time," he whispered in an awed tone. "It seems long ago as a morning of the Fourth when I was a kid. About this time yesterday the desert opened to our eyes out yonder, and we saw the Manetikans, in fight formation, right down in front. Of course we knew they were there, but they cleared so fiendishly close in the light. Everything's close down here! And then it was on—the fighting, the men-masses running in and out, like two furious boiling oils that can't blend—boiling against each other. I never saw death much. It began to grow on me yesterday daybreak—the dust, the pony shrieks, thud of feet and falling blood."

"You weren't going to speak of it again——"

"That's a fact. It was the dawn here that brought it up."

Maunsell arose and spoke to the African, but the girl helped the servant understand.

The servant returned and talked to her.

"He wants to know if you want the white stallion or a fresh one," she said.

"Oh, the Persian by all means! Luckiest thing on the field—and so game that he's humorous. Ask if the stablemen have given him every care——"

"He says they have worked with him ever since you came in," the girl interpreted from the black man.

They stood in the doorway as the pony was brought; silent together, a full minute. Then she followed out to the gates. As they stood there, the first sound of firing reached them faintly through the red dusk of the desert.

"My God, they're going to do it all over again!" he muttered. Good-by——"

He saw to his astonishment that her lip trembled.

"I'll get in to-night, maybe. Dooin may want something. Especially if they bend in the Nuanis' line this way. I'll hurry in ahead of a possible retreat — Why, you wouldn't cry. Your heart's the soundest thing in Africa——"

She had turned and was running back.

X

AT ELEVEN o'clock that morning in the midst of the fighting, Maunsell and Dooin were together on the sand, a thin, hard-holding line of Nuani warriors between them and the Manetikans. They were both hurt and, by a queer break of luck, were alone.

The defenders of Vit-Arebo were being badly used. Almost the entire fighting strength of the Nuanis had now reached the field, but the enemy was stubborn about giving ground. Moment by moment it became apparent to the Nuani leaders that the Manetikans had been planning this aggressive for months. The defending force didn't suffer for lack of numbers so much as from non-preparation, from the lack of order in their hasty disposition of units.

The truth dawned in the minds of the Nuani warriors as they fought. Hundreds died with a curse for Jasmin on their lips. Hatred for Barbelix's son increased with the fury of battle. Hour by hour the Nuanis saw more clearly how the Mohammedans had been at work upon the prince within the palace—within the very halls sacred to Barbelix—halls that now held Manetikan murderers and stirred with the laughter of Manetikan women.

Maunsell had been unconscious. Dooin was sitting beside him on the ground, calling, pulling at his shoulders. The fighting line had bellied far out from them at this time, like a long wind-blown kite-string. This meant a charge on the part of the Nuanis, but the Manetikans would answer presently; at least they always had answered before. The kite-string would draw back and back. This very ground where the white men sat had been fought over a dozen times already. Within an hour, if they stayed here, nothing could save them from being tramped into the ground. Maunsell heard a voice from afar off.

"Palto, oh, I say, palto!"

MAUNSELL was sure all would be right if he could ever get those ladders up against the building. It wasn't ladders. He was trying to prop up his own eyelids. He laughed.

"Where's the pony?"

Dooin was looking around the welter. Many warriors and four or five ponies were down near by, but not the white stallion.

"Something pried me off," Maunsell muttered.

He was on his knees, but suddenly rolled over backward again, no explanation. Dooin renewed his plaint.

"Palto—oh, I say, palto!"

The answer came from afar off:

"Tell the prince I'm indisposed——"

Dooin chuckled. "That there's a good one, somethin' to tell afterward, all right, but listen, mister, they'll be comin' back—fightin' over this ground. I seem to hear 'em comin'!"

Maunsell opened his eyes. Dooin was sitting queerly—back rigid as ever, but legs crumpled under—sifting tobacco-dust on a yellow paper, string of the pouch between his teeth.

"Listen now, don't roll over backward again. Stay with me, kid. Here, I'm rollin' you one. I'm working—all but the legs. Haven't looked 'em over yet, but they're sure peeved over something—them legs o' mine. Listen, now."

Maunsell took the lighted cigaret and held on with all his might in the big black fog which swooped down and over him. This time he managed to stay sitting until it passed. Then he looked out again through a rack of pain. The shocks of the fighting were mercifully cushioned in

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Maunsell's head was bowed under the burden. He watched his own feet as they came up and down—wooden, ludicrous movements, and always that sick sinking of the heel.

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distance, but the sun was getting in its killing work in the stillness. Maunsell's right hand came up vaguely to rub his eyes, but he knocked his helmet off.

"Don't do that again!" said Dooin. "I got it for you twice in the last ten minutes. Say, what hit you, kid?"

Maunsell didn't answer. His eyelids had widened. For a full sixty seconds he stared off into space. Dooin tried to follow his stare, though the turning wrung a whimper of pain from his own lips. Maunsell seemed lost in the misty horizon. Finally his lips moved:

"I GUESS I killed him. Why, come to think of it, I did kill that Manetikan chap. We were down. Yes, the white pony had ditched me somehow, and I saw that fellow's simitar. He got up before I did. He started for me—to put me—to finish me off, you understand, with his simitar. Just then—the little gun you gave me, Dooin—it went off in my hand just as the big blade was raised. Queer, I wasn't thinking about the pistol—thinking more about the simitar—that it was Turkish—the simitar shape, you know, and how queer for a Turkish blade to get an American—away out here——"

"That was before I got to you."

Maunsell nodded.

"Where was all that?"

Maunsell looked bewildered a minute.

"Why, it was right here," he said vaguely. "Could that be—could that be—him?"

He pointed to one of the humped figures.

"I don't see the simitar," Dooin said bruskly.

Maunsell started to crawl toward the corpse with fascinated eyes.

"Come on back, it don't matter."

Maunsell went on. "Yes," he said quietly, "he was lying on it."

"You're a queer cus, Maunsell—oh, damned queer. But I'm for you."

"I'm better now. I guess I was only stunned a bit. Can you walk, Bill?"

"Not a chance. I'm dead down there. What are you going to do about it?"

Dooin looked up whimsically, as he spoke, and then back at the firing-line. His face had fallen away. It was bone-white and the pathos in it touched Maunsell, deep enough to take his mind from the dangerous circuit of thoughts having to do with his last shot and the black man who lay near by upon the Turkish blade.

"I'm going to carry you back, Bill, but let me see where you're hurt, first."

Dooin protested, but the other bent him back gently and began straightening out the long legs.

"Yes," Maunsell said abruptly, "I'm carrying you a-ways."

"But where?"

Maunsell squinted back toward Vit-Arebo. Dooin's face uplifted as if in prayer.

"Don't try it, palto—not in sunlight like this. I'm restin' easy right here. If you have to—go and get help alone. Please, mister, you're not built for packing my kind."

Maunsell was partly over him now.

"Just give yourself to me, Bill—all to me. Why, when the lines break back this way—" He had risen with the long-geared figure across his shoulders before finishing the sentence: "A man unable to get up like you—never would get up."

He trudged on a long way. "I mean they'd ride over him—ride him into the ground," he added.

"For Gawd's sake, don't waste your breath!" Dooin whispered.

Maunsell's head was bowed under the burden. He watched his own feet as they came up and down—wooden, ludicrous movements, and always that sick sinking of the heel. It was becoming a life or death matter not to stop. For a time each step was a triumph, while the fog stole over him again, like a black hood, but that cleared and his legs were still lifting on and on. It *was* life or death—a sort of making good for all days. It was his big chance—his last chance. There was something in him, if he could reach it, that would see him through—something that had deserted him that night with Farquar. He must win it back now, win it back to stay; must take it back with him to the courtyard in Vit-Arebo.

Thus he fought with himself against the stealing coma, against surges of pain, deafening thuds of his heart, the smothering fulness of his throat. Sometimes they looked red, sometimes they looked far away, but up they came, one by one—wooden, even waterlogged to look at, but up they came, his legs, one by one.

Dooin had spoken, Dooin had laughed, Dooin had prayed again. Dooin's voice distracted him. He had to keep his mind working just so, or his legs stumbled. Dooin was talking again. Later, the actual words bored in:

"Palto—listen, I say—put me down!"

Maunsell's lips moved, making a queer whistling noise.

"Listen, you're frightening him!"

Maunsell took no notice of that.

"Listen, he'll stand for you—the white stallion! Put me down."

Maunsell halted, his legs wide apart, but swaying. A terrible anger rose in him lest it be some hoax of his own mind—about the white stallion.

"It's me on your shoulders that scares him! Put me down and he'll let you go up to him."

He dropped forward to his knees, Dooin's body rolling to the sand. For a minute after he rose, Maunsell couldn't see, his eyeballs to the point of bursting with blood.

Slowly a moving film in front cleared to the white stallion, trotting in a circle around him, empty saddle, hanging bridle-rein, arched crest. Maunsell stepped forward, holding out his hand. He tried to speak. The pony turned and trotted back—the circle slightly narrowed. Maunsell made queer sounds in his throat, always walking nearer. The Persian sniffed, but stood, a flash in his eyes. The man's hand touched his head, the fingers trailed down to the bridle-rein and closed. That was the moment Maunsell knew he had won, whether he lived or not.

XI

"SHE'S a grimy old dear," Dooin was saying.

The black-haired girl, sitting by Maunsell's cot in their quarters, veered her head around to look at the trooper.

"Hot and earthy and ancient, she is," he went on. "Don't care for men. She knows they all come back to her—all bodies come back to her. If they don't come fast enough, she starts a war, and they tramp each other into the desert. If she gets thirsty, another war gives her the deep red drink. Are you parties gettin' my monolog?"

Maunsell laughed softly.

"Get it all, Bill," he said, "but what's it about?"

"You ought to know by this time. Africa, I'm talking about palto. I used to see her on the map—always looked like a fat mammy to me, bulging at the waist, apron none too clean. Used to look at her for hours and then turn the pages over to South America, so tidy and slim-limbed. But at the last, it was the old mammy who drew my eyes. Always she was sayin' to me: 'Dinner's ready, Bill Dooin, come down and get it, suh.' Knew I'd come all those years; knew I'd get mine, when I got here."

Maunsell pressed the girl's hand.

"Guess you think I'm delirious," Bill muttered a minute later.

"Nothing like that, but you're sure literary."

Maunsell's voice had been husky in spite of himself. It was the same day late in the afternoon. They were back in town, but the fighting had followed them in. The Manetikans had been gaining ground through the afternoon. The Nuani line now pressed in within two miles of Vit-Arebo.

THE white Persian had brought them in. Maunsell was thinking (at the bottom of the great gulf of weariness in which he lay) that there must be some deep meaning in the white stallion appearing loose in the desert just in the nick of time. Life didn't treat the black men that way. The second day's battle had spent them in hideous numbers. It was something as Dooin said about "old mammy Africa." She used up her own blacks in fearsome numbers, yet a brave Persian pony, with a hanging bridle-rein hovered within call of two white men who needed a ride. And the white stallion was still alive. Maunsell had seen him from his cot in quarters—wrapped in straw cooling-blankets—the same gallant black eyes under the sweater-hood—as the stable boys walked him up and down the courtyard.

But Dooin *did* sound delirious.

Maunsell opened his eyes. The black-haired girl was looking down at him.

"Come close," he whispered.

Her head bent down.

"Tell me, honest, do you think he's—" he indicated Dooin's cot.

Her face did not move, not an eyelid. She looked unflinchingly into Maunsell's eyes.

"I'd tell you, if I knew. I don't know—I don't know."

The last sunlight was in the doorway. The beam was thick with yellow dust, not from the courtyard alone, not from Vit-Arebo alone, but from the desert itself, which was stirred like a sea from the furious rush and tramp of men. The fighting was nearer; near enough for the great undertone roar to give up cries—human voices above the steadily beating din.

Dooin was mumbling to himself. The sunlight had vanished from the doorway. Maunsell fancied just now he heard the screaming of the prince. He identified

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the bang of the red door, the continual swing of the great gates, the voice of Shazzar in the courtyard. And now, there was no mistake, one courier was telling a story, a second verifying it—a third.

The girl's back straightened. She was listening. Maunsell saw her face turn white, but he knew the message the couriers had brought before she interpreted:

"The Nuanis' line has broken. The whole army is being driven in upon the city. The second day ends in great loss to the defenders—perhaps the whole issue of the battle!"

Silence in the dim quarters for a moment or two after that, as if the little place were cut off from the din of the courtyard and the vaster din outside. In that silence Maunsell heard from the next cot:

"Always callin'—callin' old Bill Dooin to his dinner. It was sure on the table when he got here, too."

There was hurt in the words, and actual organic pang, but back of all that Maunsell felt the pulse of great drama—some new meaning of comrade, something spacious and humorous and *forever*. Drama—he couldn't describe it, but it made all books cheap, as if something had come through to him from the spiritual core of things, through the lips of the bone-white face.

Maunsell knew no pain himself, only he wanted to rest. He could get up and walk, in a pinch. He had demonstrated that. He would never speak of it, even to the black-haired girl, but he had made his legs work this day—equatorial noon, a man across his shoulders. He could do it again. He laughed to himself just now. Doing it again made him think of Farquar on that last night. Farquar's face had said: "I can do it again."

The woman was tightly holding to his wrist, her eyes turned toward the doorway. The air was thick with dust—fighting in the streets outside. Then in the space of five minutes, from the time the shock of sounds was at its highest, quiet crept in—until it was all like meadow-lands in contrast. Maunsell craned up to see full darkness in the doorway.

" 'And the evening and the morning were the second day,' " the woman breathed.

The darkness about them now was familiar and soothing, as if it belonged to the silence. He was still sitting up. Their faces were together. He caught her suddenly and drew her close:

"God, Bessie, I'm glad I found you!" he whispered.

A moment afterward, from the next cot, they heard a chuckle and the whispered words:

"Mammy Africa—yes, suh. Old Mammy Africa!"

XII

IT WAS toward midnight and something solemn was going on in the courtyard. Certain sounds connected, made Maunsell care to see the rest; enough so, that he arose and made his way through the crowd. At first it appeared that certain women were the center of a mysterious ceremony. The great *rases*, leaders of the different divisions of the Nuani warriors, were gathered about them in the encompassing silence of defeat. The name of Shazzar was upon their lips; the name of Barbelix and tribal gods. The thing at the center pulled Maunsell deeper in. Why this low hysteria of mourning from the women?

Now a familiar screaming at the heart of the throng—Prince Jasmin and none other, the nucleus of the affair.

Iron was heavy upon his soft flesh—one of the yokes and chains worn by the Manetikan prisoners, who had been brought to the courtyard back toward the beginning of things. The prince was bowed with the burden and all but mad with fear. The women were close about him—three dark lovely creatures, on their knees, bending toward him. It was from these that the low weeping had come. Possibly the most loyal and devoted of his Nuani women, Maunsell thought at first.

EIGHT or nine black men formed the next circle around the prince. No mistake now! These were the survivors of the chain-gang—at least, that portion of the prisoners which had not been sent back to their own people. Light began to break over the affair now. The three women at the center were the Manetikan playthings whom the prince had sent for—pretty toys used by Mohammedan agents to bring about his downfall and the ignominy of the Nuani people.

Jasmin was held now before his leaders in the shame of his great apostacy—his household violated, the seraglio emptying its inmost contents to the night and the degraded pavement of the courtyard. Only a Mohammedan could understand the depths of this.

The black-haired girl slipped up beside Maunsell as he emerged from the crowd. The clean young strength of her aroused his reverence. Knowing something of the language of the Nuani, she had caught the drift of things from the outside.

"Their deaths will be to-morrow—the last thing," she whispered. "The Nuanis are expecting defeat, but they will arrange the bodies of the Manetikan women and prisoners around the prince, for the victors to find when they enter the courtyard——"

"Some grim humor," Maunsell answered. "And so our Nuanis have granted defeat?"

"They talk as if it were all over but their own deaths to-morrow. And your—our friend is conscious again. The black men say he is dying——"

Maunsell felt her arm thrust through his, pressing courage upon him.

"Did the Nuani doctors come again—while I was gone?"

"Yes. You see, it was more than his limbs. He has been trampled. They said it was like—that a horse had fallen upon him. Also, the *rases* are coming in a few minutes to pay tribute to him for the work he has done with the soldiers."

Maunsell's step quickened. They entered the candle-light. The face turned slowly—something of the boy that had been, in the white waste of it; at least, in the peculiar light and angle for an instant.

"The old town's chokin' in her own blood, palto——"

Dooin's laugh was in the words, as well as that inevitability which comes to the voice of one who finds a cool awareness for his last hours. Maunsell sat down, wondering. He must go on with only the essence of this friendship—the best bit of the man-thing he had ever known; but why couldn't Dooin see his work here fail at the last? Must the unmoral nature of little Jas bring down ultimate ruin upon a people that had stood for a thousand years—successfully fending off Persian and Arab and Turk, even standing for their own in the councils of the first-magnitude powers of the earth? Maunsell suddenly felt a queer revolt in his heart against accepting the defeat of the Nuanis. It wasn't only that he feared for the black-haired girl, when the Mohammedans rushed into the courtyard.

"They talk as if they're whipped, Bill," he began.

"Whipped, but they won't quit, mister. Manetika won't break down the gates yonder, while there's a whole lot of live Nuanis——"

"But why do they take it for granted they're whipped?"

"It's a case of heart-break—shame and all that——"

"That's phony stuff. The fact that they were driven in yesterday—well, it wouldn't have happened, if you'd been on the job in the afternoon!"

Dooin chuckled, his eyes moving along the shadowy rafters.

"You and me were havin' it out on our own hook," he muttered.

"A close-up."

They heard the voices of the *rases* assembling outside.

"But Bill," Maunsell whispered, "they are outside now. The different chiefs are coming in to see you. Drive it into them they're not whipped—you! Get them pulling together again—breathe on 'em! It's the last ounce that wins. Tell them so—the final flicker of courage in every big match or battle, man or bug or beast or army. A fight isn't lost because it looks so. Tell them something invincible comes to help the side that springs the last ounce of sheer grit——"

Dooin was looking at him in awe.

"WHERE did you learn all that, mister—billiards?"

"Some in billiards—but more yesterday, watching my legs work, as we were having it out on our own hook——"

"But what to do—what to do, palto? Give me the rest, quick."

"Tell them to go out and cop, to-night—to take the aggressive at once! Manetika is sleeping tight out there, right now. She stopped short last evening because it was dark; because she's African, because she's always fought in daylight only. It's time Nuani sprung a new one. Let Nuani get together now—get together in the next hour or two, for one more unmitigated wallop—carrying the hell to them, instead of waiting to receive it to-morrow daylight——"

"I'm beginning to get you——"

It was the moment of the keenest pain between them. The immobile Maunsell, of the gamester face, actually winced. The moment of the big wrench isn't always at the last.

Dooin understood all perfectly.

"That there's all right, palto. We understand," he smiled. "I'm tired controllin' myself anyway—down here."

They were coming in, the different *rases*, to pay their *devoirs* to the white man as he passed. A touch of Europe, a touch of savage—such was the motley of Africa—but their mourning was sincere. There stood in silence on either side of the cot

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seven strong men of the Nuanis; seven tired men, too, in the very anguish of fatigue after two days of battle—and face to face with their own ends.

Maunsell and the black-haired girl walked up and down outside, listening to Dooin's voice. The Nuani leaders appeared to accept the white man's words as having authority from the Other Side. Long they debated, alone and together. The soft stirring among the "doomed" Nuanis, through all the streets of Vit-Arebo in the next two hours, was not encugh to startle the inmost of the Manetikan sentries.

For a long time after the *rases* left his quarters, Dooin had been silent—man and woman watching beside him. His eyelids fluttered and finally opened, as the great stealthy charge of the Nuanis was launched—in the core of darkness, in the hour of deep darkness before the day. Dooin's hands groped for their hands. His eyelids squinted tightly, as if he were pushing the darkness from behind them. He pulled himself up—as the charge became a thundering roar.

"Call the black boys!" he said hoarsely.

Two of the Nuanis lifted him to their shoulders. The gates opened; the man and woman following the old trooper and his carriers out through the deserted streets toward the thirsty sand reaches to the northeast.

"But you—" Maunsell whispered to the girl beside him, as a stray bullet *pinged* past.

"Oh, this time—let me go where you go!"

"I want that—always!"

There was no overtaking the lines. The shock and choke of the great clashes were farther and farther away, as the Nuanis drove their enemies forward, cutting them off from their centers, as the circle around Vit-Arebo widened. Dooin had been carried far. The black had turned to gray. He asked to be put down on the sand.

"I can smell it," he whispered. "The old desert. She's wakin' up. Thirsty as ever——"

They saw his tired smile.

"Don't take me back there. Leave me here," he whispered. "The old desert—she's my runnin' mate, mister, just as sure as turk and cranberry sauce go together. No thirst but hers ever could match mine. Used to hear her callin', and came out to get her, but she gets me."

Long after, he sat up rigidly and pointed to the blazing east.

"What's that, palto?"

"The rising sun," Maunsell answered.

FULL day had broken before Maunsell and the woman returned to the courtyard. All was impressively silent in the fresh day—the Nuani warriors, afar off hammering home their *coup* to the last deadly nail. A second time the man spoke of the silence.

"They've gone," she whispered. "The Manetikans and the prince. Why, it's like a baptism—as if you and I were alone in the world!"

Just then they heard the whining voice of the missionary from the shadows, three doors to the right. They laughed; then turned into the dim stillness of Dooin's quarters together.

Keynes *vs.* Tardieu

IN A recent number of EVERYBODY'S, Mr. John Maynard Keynes published an article criticizing the Peace Treaty from the point of view set forth in his book, "The Economic Consequences of the Peace," which has been so widely read and discussed during the past year. Two months later, M. André Tardieu, former High Commissioner of France to the United States, answered Mr. Keynes's criticism from the point of view of France. Here follows a letter which Mr. Keynes has asked us to publish in rejoinder to M. Tardieu:

KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.
23d October, 1920.

To the Editor of Everybody's Magazine.

SIR: M. Tardieu sets the note of his reply, in your November number, to my criticism of the Treaty of Versailles with a paragraph of personal abuse. In this paragraph he insinuates that during the Peace Conference I actively supported the policy which I have subsequently denounced in my book. M. Tardieu's suggestion is false. Moreover, he has been rash in advancing it; for he forgets that in the *Petit Parisien* of March 9, 1920, he himself wrote the exact opposite.

In this article he was denouncing the Manifesto of the Economic Section of the Supreme Council, then lately published, on the ground that it had adopted my thesis of the economic solidarity of Europe and was, therefore, antagonistic to the principles of hatred and hegemony of a part toward and over the rest, which he himself prefers. He seemed—so he wrote—to be once more face to face with Mr. Keynes, who, in his capacity of British financial expert at the Peace Conference, had "untiringly supported all the financial arguments which the Treaty has condemned, and which the memorandum (of the Economic Section) revives." (*"M. Keynes a soutenu inlassablement tous les arguments financiers que le Traité a condamnés et que le mémorandum réveille."*)

He forgets also that in a speech in the French Chamber on July seventh, at which he was present, his colleague M. Loucheur (who was directly concerned with the financial side of the German Treaty, which M. Tardieu was not) remarking that I was an old acquaintance of his, declared that he had heard from my own lips during the Conference of Paris the very same argument which he had subsequently read in my book. Quoting from the minutes of a Committee of the Council of Four, held on March 26, 1919, M. Loucheur boasted, amidst lively cries of *très bon, très bon,* from the surrounding deputies, how successfully he had put me in my place on that occasion.

The tone thus set is continued in the rest of M. Tardieu's article, even to the point of alleging (on page 97) that he possesses secret documents which (if he chose to publish them) would be damaging to me; and by suggesting (on page 98) that many of those who in the various countries of the world advocate a revision of the Treaty of Versailles are under the sinister influence of "international financial organizations." These words in the mouth of a former Plenipotentiary of the French Republic are, if I may borrow M. Tardieu's phrase, "inelegant."

As, however, I have already had my say in your columns at considerable length, I will not trespass on them further, except to apologize for having been stirred by the insincerity of M. Tardieu's observations into breaking my general rule of not replying to criticism which is purely personal, and is irrelevant to the arguments I employ and the policies I advocate.

I am, etc.,
(Signed) J. M. KEYNES.

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Mrs. Burton Green—otherwise Irene Franklin—with her husband and children.

A Redhead with Something Under It

By Marc Connelly

What a lot of people it takes to keep a nation cheered up! Cartoonists, column conductors, comedians, joke-smiths, comic-strip artists, all sorts of stage entertainers. EVERYBODY'S is giving its readers a chance at close-ups of some of these national laugh-makers—in 1920 with "The Colyumists' Confessional" and now with a group of headline entertainers known on the stage the country over. Irene Franklin makes the first bow.

EVERYTHING considered, there was little excitement when Stage Manager Franklin one morning came into the theatre where he was employed and announced that it was a girl. The year was 1885 and the place was St. Louis.

A few months later, according to unofficial records, Mrs. Franklin noticed her daughter "making faces." Some one said she would probably become an actress.

"On hearing the mystic words I burst from my crib and have been traveling ever since," says our heroine, whose name complete is Irene Lucille Marguerite Franklin Green, but who has used only forty per cent. of it in making herself acquainted with several million Americans.

Those Americans to-day regard Irene Franklin as one of the keenest observers who ever pushed Judy O'Grady, the Colonel's lady and the little sisters of each under a microscope. She knows everything amusing and tragic there is to know about them, and in her mimicry of them has the ability to condense a temperament into an arrangement of her hair and the cry of a soul into a few pungent words or a gesture of the hands. Among the institutions of our modern theatre she ranks as a sort of public library, with the added distinction of having written all her own highly popular books.

"Mother, being a romantic Irish lady, thought her own first name wasn't enough for one girl, so she decided to call the little stranger after *Irene* in 'Irene's Vow,' by Bertha M. Clay. Owen Meredith was responsible for the Lucille part. And me so helpless, with no nose to speak of."

It was a time when future biographers were impressing children with the necessity of making their stage débuts in the arms of a nurse. So Miss Franklin made her first appearance at the age of six months. She was carried by the heroine through a pretty paper snowstorm into the big scene of James A. Herne's "Hearts of Oak." It happened in Chicago. She was red-headed even then, and many people in the audience at first thought the heroine was a little out of the picture in showing up with a railroad lantern.

"After my triumph in Chicago," she

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recalls, "I retired for a while to complete my education. I did not return to the stage until I was three years and seven months old, when I hired out as a professional Little One with Minnie Palmer. In the meantime I had learned to walk and talk, so I added a song and dance to my repertoire. The song was 'Peek-a-Boo,' the 'Dardanella' of the period.

"Having mastered the lighter side of my profession, I determined to bolster up the dramatic end. At the age of four I joined the Tom Brown Comedy Company, one of the best piratical 'rep' troupes of its time. With them I played in the 'Banker's Daughter,' 'The Celebrated Case' and 'May Blossom,' and was *Bobby Crockett* in 'Davy Crockett.' I did a song and dance between the acts. In two weeks I knew all the plays and they made me prompter.

"At six I was a star. At least I was playing *Editha* in "Editha's Burglar" and spending all my spare time getting up in *Juliet* and *Lady Macbeth* in case anything happened to Julia Marlowe. I also did cartwheels and 'splits' each morning to be prepared if John Ringling dropped in."

WHEN she was sixteen, Miss Franklin returned from Australia via Europe, an orphan with a baby sister. For several months she gave an excellent imitation of a young person starving to death. Eventually she drifted into the smallest of "small-time" vaudeville, and according to her own testimony was not worth the meager salary the managers paid her.

Then she fell in love with the orchestra at Tony Pastor's Vaudeville Theatre on Fourteenth Street, New York, and her fortune and future were assured.

James Burton Eugene Van Tassel-Green was the orchestra's name. He played the piano accompaniment to the Franklin specialty, so bad a specialty, avers its author, that big-hearted Tony Pastor booked it solely because he did not want an actress and her younger sister dying on his doorstep and cluttering up the traffic.

The orchestra also thought the Franklin act was rather terrible. It was only after he had seen it so often that it did not bother him that he began studying the young person who was performing it.

"You're a clever girl," he said one day. "I like you. I'd like to do something for you. I'd like to buy you a hat."

"I know your kind," was the maiden's reply. "Let me pass."

Her rebuff had little effect. The orchestra glanced at the rest of her street clothes, which had been serving her for more than a year.

"The rest of you looks all right," he commented. "But no manager in the world would allow you in his office, not to mention his theatre, while you wore that thing on your head. For God's sake, let me buy you a hat, and you can pay me back when you get the money."

So the pair sallied forth and bought a sailor hat for one dollar and ninety-eight cents.

"It must have been a peach of a hat, for he married me that May," says Burton Green's wife.

Within the next year a new star flew into a fixed position amidst the brightest constellation in the world of the theatre. The pair had started the season at the joint salary of eighty dollars a week, the young husband playing piano accompaniments for his wife's singing. At the end of the year the turn was receiving a weekly check for one thousand dollars.

During those twelve months Miss Franklin had done something to that great phase of American amusement—vaudeville. In a field where subtlety had been perhaps the least necessary factor in achieving success, a young woman had brought forth a new type of song and a consistently new method of singing it. It was a song whose sentiment was not contained, as was usual, in banal words, but in simple, fresh phrases that became vivid and eloquent through the singer's method of projecting them to the audience.

Its fun, and hilarious fun it was, lay not so much in the admitted comicality of their lines as in their pertinence. The lowly soul, whose broken heart recalled of a drummer only that "My Gawd, he smelled so nice—I think it was Jockey Club," said something objectively funny, something which might have been uttered by hundreds of girls. But it came with a definite wrench of reality from the heart of the particular chambermaid who was actually saying it. Therein was one of the reasons for Miss Franklin's complete capture of her new audiences. She had allowed them to recognize the truth in terms of the comic.

Not only was she singing and acting these songs; she spent what she now estimates to have been about eighteen hours a day writing them. She has bought only three lyrics during her career. The music for her words has always been written by her husband. Though her voice, according to her own indictment, consists of only five notes and a squeak, it has never failed to delight the ear.

"I was pretty lucky in picking a husband who could write real tunes," is her only apology.

THE Franklin brand of humor is a complete thing in itself. Her ability to observe is coupled with a curiously effective adjustment of imagination in everything she has written. And in nearly everything she says, for that matter, her similes are a joy forever. In a casual conversation recently she was recounting her experiences while visiting a certain Western city:

"New York's thoroughfares are forever being pointed out as side-shows of humanity," she said. "But I wish you could have seen the women I saw out there. All the old ones think they're flappers simply because they're wearing short skirts. They never realize they have ankles like the Redwoods. And the childish innocence of their faces as they come down the street! They've been out in the world so little that they walk into horses. The real flappers think they have to make up like vamps. They wear so much jet they ring like a pitcher of ice-water."

It was application of this same comedy sense that made Miss Franklin's "Waitress at Child's" a newly discovered but amazingly real being when she routed the customer who had asked for a *demi-tasse* with the remark: "If my mother hadn't raised me a lady, I'd defend my reputation with a cawfee-cup."

"New York, Chicago, Boston and Pittsburgh seem to like my sophisticated characters best," their creator testifies. "The smaller cities seem to want me to dress up and look pretty—Heaven help me! They think I'm not being quite nice when I sing about a chorus girl who, when in Washington, is often asked to send the Senate back to work."

No town however small has failed to enjoy her distinctly sentimental songs. When the rich little girl who wished she could be a janitor's child so that she might find things in ash-cans is offered, she always receives a tumultuous reception. So does the tragic plight of the small daughter of the tenements who confesses:

I'm bringin' up the family.
And it ain't no cinch, take it from me.
For you can't be mother to half a dozen kids
When your wishbone's where your backbone ought to be.

DURING her early experiences as a character *comédienne* the singer and her husband found themselves completing a song which from a technical standpoint is a splendidly horrible example of what a song should not be. Its foremost traducer is its writer.

"It was a sort of accident," she confesses. "The lyric was dreadful. It didn't rhyme, it didn't scan, it didn't seem to be much of anything. It's probably the worst lyric I ever wrote. The public took it to its breast as its own child."

Its refrain is not unlike the "Star Spangled Banner" in that almost every American citizen knows its first and last lines.

The complete chorus is as follows:

"Redhead! Redhead! Gingerbreadhead!
"Carrots! Bricktop! Golden-rusthead!
"Rodekopf! Sorrel-top!"
Gee, I'd like to push them in the pond!
"Redhead! Redhead! Gingerbreadhead!
"Freckle-face! Strawberry-blondehead!
"Here's a white horse; hide your head!"
Why wasn't I born a blonde?

Not only did the public take it to its breast, but it began showing it off to the neighbors. The composer-partner-husband had written a tune for it that had a curious note of melancholy in its melody. It might not have been that virtue alone that caused everybody to whistle it, but that is what happened.

It has long been one of the faithful standbys of the Franklin-Green *opera*. Its tangible returns are evidenced in the presence of a lovely old English house in Chester Hill Park, Mount Vernon, New York. When here, the actress becomes Mrs. Green, whose main interest lies in planning the future of a couple of small Greens.

There's the fine grand piano in the music-room down-stairs, but it doesn't command anything near the respect accorded a little white upright in a study on the third floor. This was the instrument on which "Redhead" and dozens of other successes were first played.

Irene Franklin, writer and *comédienne*, is an entirely American product. Her graphic American wit is devoted to the creation of thoroughly American characters. Her stage method, brisk and breezy but never volatile, is as native as the rest of her.

Which may be another reason why she is one of our greatest and best-liked entertainers.

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"My ridiculous Cyrus is ill, or thinks he is, just when my calendar is filled to overflowing."

After-Wit

By Nalbro Bartley

In the small town where you were brought up there isn't much chance of gracefully getting away with a newly acquired family tree, very recently polished manners, and the affectations that sometimes accompany sudden affluence. When Quimby's local junk-dealer became an enormously wealthy profiteer, the splendor of his family was magnificent to behold. But the natives weren't quite sufficiently impressed, and old Doctor Bellamy, in particular, pierced the veneer with gruff ruthlessness. Such a situation provokes this second delightful story in a series by Miss Bartley.

HIS old-fashioned buggy being temperamentally pulled by Home Rule up elaborate garden paths—prologue to Castlecrest—Doctor Bellamy became convinced that the Lord never sent a profiteer a fortune unless his family contained one or more *bona fide* idiots—sort of dog-worried-by-fleas arrangement!

Gardeners wheeling Irish peat for the orchid gardens recalled the time when they were planting dwarf trees for the sunken terraces while genealogists constructed a safely vague family tree for Mrs. C. Epping-Smith's delectation.

What a profiteerer for such a little town had been Quimby's verdict when Cy Smith, of the lower green plush and golden oak strata, dealer in junk and iron scrappings, had, from a cloudy 1914 war sky evolved a fortune, remaining oblivious to patriotic housewives losing sleep in deciding how best to conserve a cup of mush spilled on the kitchen oilcloth!

The rising of the C. Epping-Smiths—and hints it would soon be the C. Smith-Eppings—had taken the town by helpless surprise, including Dr. Peter Bellamy who had bills standing out against them since the day Cyrus, Junior, had been initiated into this vale of tears.

"My word, an imposing pile," remarked the doctor to his dog, Dammit who sat as proudly beside the doctor's shabby self as Mrs. C. Epping-Smith's pet Pekingese basked on velvet cushions when *en route* for limousine exercise.

Home Rule was in front of the glistening white wedding cake of a house. It seemed to say, "Fancy anything more swell-elegant if you can, find a trace of the former cottage days of my owners, dare to suggest they ever inclined toward Saturday night wooden-tub baths, hard times socials, hash."

The myriad of turrets, towers, sun porches, pergolas and what not, with peacocks strutting before an old-new sun dial, to Dammit's wrath, substantiated the doctor's comment. It was in truth an imposing pile.

The doctor hitched Home Rule to a glistening post, mounted the front steps with his hat in one hand and the other rumpling up his thatch of mouse-colored hair. He did not mind a midnight call to the far end of town to prescribe for the participants in a Hungarian family feud, nor did he protest a hill climb through muddy roads to reach a farmer's family in the grip of some catastrophe. But he distinctly rebelled at being summoned to Castlecrest by Mrs. C. Epping-Smith who, report said, was so "built up" by her husband's profiteering that when she telephoned she never gave her name, expecting them to sense it was Mrs. C. Epping-Smith's aura transmitted *via* wire.

But the doctor came because something about Cyrus Smith, millionaire-in-a-minute, harassed husband of Sophia, and embarrassed parent of young Cyrus and Leota, incited both pity and indignation.

Waiting for Yama, a newly installed Japanese butler who kept the family stepping to reach his expectations, the doctor whistled at Dammit to desist peacock pursuit and settle down for a nap.

With a barbed wire smile, Yama admitted him.

"Tell Cy it's Bellamy," the doctor said easily, sinking uninvited into a nest of satin cushions heaped upon a reconstructed gondola, a galaxy of murky-faced beauties-done-in-oils greeting him from surrounding walls.

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"Hello, Doc.," he began pertly. "What do you think of this getting an electric jag? Anything to it?"

Besides this there was the stage library on his right, with endless sets of books, and the stage art gallery on his left. Through frowning eyebrows he watched trim maids trip about. It suggested old-style curtain raising on society dramas; all that was lacking was the orchestra's playing of a waltz which should die away as some prominent character entered. Instead, a grand-opera record floated out from the music-room and the wine steward, Brabson, a new accessory to Castlecrest, pompously paraded across the floor. He wore plum-colored livery, including silk hose, knee pants, buckled pumps, and a gold chain with dangling keys about his proud neck.

The doctor's eyes were savage as the *pud-pud* of the buckled pumps died away, and there tripped forth Mrs. C. Epping-Smith, still known to the doctor as Sophie.

Rising from the days of housekeeping and doing odd jobs for more prosperous neighbors, Mrs. Epping-Smith had achieved an effect of a huge chunk of permanently limousine dowager. According to the town's breezy description she was a two-story, over-stuffed blonde resembling a cockatoo as to dress. She swooped in with that "ah-me-good-man" expression, wearing tiers upon tiers of jade velvet with startling crimson linings for each tier.

"MY RIDICULOUS Cyrus is ill," with effusion, extending a plump, bejeweled hand, "or thinks he is—just when my calendar is filled to overflowing. Of course there is no one else for Cyrus but dear old Doctor Bellamy!" (Playful business of finger shaking, head-tilting, etc.)

Knowing full well Sophie's previous height of altruism was to leave a stale ham sandwich for the ice-man, and that she boasted of how many boxes of flowers were sent her when she was ill, and then was "dreadfully hurt" when the doctor plucked up enough courage to send in a bill the following spring, Doctor Bellamy stood on tiptoes unexpectedly, a characteristic pose when his temper threatened to leap the stockade.

"What's wrong with Cy?" he asked gruffly, "too many truffles? Too little rail-splitting?"

"Cyrus is temperamental. I don't mind confessing," laying a detaining hand on his shabby sleeve, "that since we've returned from touring the world it has been difficult to become—known. This town, wonderful as it is and dearly as we love it, seems to resent all Cyrus would do for it. He would make it the most wonderful little town in America. It preys on him—so you must exert yourself and do something. For myself," shrugging her shoulders, "I have no intention of being buried in the country for long. A New York place is being arranged for—we need it sadly, but we want Castlecrest as a refuge after a busy season. Just now, we are staying on—and on—because——"

The doctor decided to cut short mutual agony. "Now that the Red Cross entrance to the social arena is closed, golf is the best way to break in. The only trouble is that the swank country club of this county is thirty miles away—a bit hard to coax 'em down here, even if you enclose your wine steward's card. Still, playing golf is bound to make 'em speak in time. You can lend things and drop things and break their things and rush 'em wonderful substitutes, and then you can ease into lunch parties at the club at which you can suggest Castlecrest as a place for charity garden fêtes and so on. It takes time to work up a clientele in any line. Remember how Cy went from backdoor to backdoor to get his trade established. See what a good business he had when he decided to run up blind alley."

Mrs. Epping-Smith's indignation tempered by a one-watt brain power of comprehension combined to make her reply vague.

ENJOYING himself, the doctor added: "You can't buy prestige like you did doors of châteaus or chunks of Italian paneling. You'll have to bank on Leota's marrying a bankrupt scion or else try playing golf. Go easy on presenting this town with too many luxuries. It is too much for the council to gracefully thank one man for a hall, park, playground, theatre and drinking-fountain all to be labeled 'from Sophia Epping-Smith, townswoman.' Human nature can only stand just so much. You ought to know that when you and Cy got all your experience and your millions where the neighbors could see, you can't go away for a year and a half and return pretending the neighbors don't know whoops or hallelujah about it! Nor can you expect the swank ones to come rushing down with an invitation for you and Leota to join the tooth-and-claw brigade, while Cyrus and the boy cut the cloth at billiards and wear out a dress suit a week going from one sub-deb dance to another. The only thing you could hurry about was making money. See things as they are—try golf—fine for Cy's liver and your overweight and heading toward your heart's fancy."

"Doctor Bellamy," she began struggling to appear Junoesque and crushing.

"Come, Sophie, don't try to fool your doctor or your lawyer—ever heard that before? Be content fooling yourself—a much safer sport. Just because Cy became a multi-millionaire and we all helped pay for it and you've gone around the world picking up pointers about small silver and old masters while this estate was being assembled, don't try to put it over your own home town. Remember, 'ye canna' be baith grand and comfortable!'"

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waving her good-naturedly aside as he climbed the carved staircase, which was purchased in northern Italy and again saw daylight in Quimby, New York.

The doctor squared his shoulders before entering his patient's room. He felt he had not spoken merely for himself in mentally spanking this limousine dowager but for the entire town—the "wonderful little town" as the Epping-Smiths now dubbed it. He remembered, as did the town, the days when the Epping-Smiths called it the "tightest little jerk on the map," and sent for every government pamphlet about homesteading claims that was ever published.

The town, as did the doctor, disapproved of sideboards which were once part of a chapel, and table-covers proving to have been ancient Portuguese bedspreads, and a dais for each sleeping-room upon which rested carved, gilded beds about which was the legend of some infamous beauty having slept her untroubled sleeps therein.

Neither the doctor nor the town approved of pink-and-white satin walls, such as Leota's room boasted of nor a "poudreuse" with lovely, intricate china, nor the dining-room with everything carved marble, cut velvet and silver except the two brilliant china pheasants supporting baskets of glass fruit. Nor could they reconcile themselves to Mrs. Epping-Smith's salon, a place to entertain long-haired, weak-chinned poets, thrusting cakes and tea down their canto-ing throats—a shameless room containing gold lotus lilies, a bust of a fair woman minus draperies which challenged one of a meditative heathen Buddha!

When Mrs. Epping-Smith had an orange dinner beginning with wine and medallions of salmon, a thick soup for thin ones and bouillon for fat ones, so it was gossiped about—and said that the thin ones' soup was the same one the dear Prince of Wales ate every twenty-sixth of August in memory of the Black Prince and the terrible Battle of Crecy—when the common herd knew it was nothing more nor less than cream of carrot—the town felt it was meet and just to cry "*A bas*" regarding the Epping-Smiths!

Opening the door of Cyrus's room, the doctor met Leota, formerly a millinery assistant, wearing primitive dress—a mist of sea-green tulle. Having known Leota since she first began to eat, the doctor smiled grimly at her affected little greeting.

"Daddy is so anxious for you," she said in the highly pitched voice rich men's daughters consider it a duty to acquire.

"THANKS, Lottie, fetch some water for my thermometer," he answered, passing into the apartment of Cyrus Epping-Smith. It was furnished in baby blue with lace-bassinet effect for this small, square-headed, heavy-jowled little rogue of forty-five with a self-made stamp on every forceful yet somehow ordinary feature.

Whenever the doctor had had a hard day and wanted to laugh and relax, he visualized Cy Smith's bedroom. There was the dais for the pale-blue enameled bed with pale-blue linen, lace-trimmed sheets in stylish array, the blue-enameled stand beside the head on which rested the vellum-bound, gold-lettered book of common prayer, a Florentine bookmark protruding.

There was the hammered silver smoking-and water sets resting on cob-webby doilies, pale-blue portières, counterpanes, white-satin striped rugs and lamps with forget-me-nots garlanding the shades. After visualizing all this and Cyrus in a torturous pale-blue gown, the doctor would recall him in his erstwhile red-flannel shirt sleeves and hip-boots as he would stalk into his cellar for a nightcap of hard cider, returning with the foaming pitcher to shake down the base-burner and challenge the doctor for a rubber of cribbage!

Dressed in dazzling striped effects, and smoking a scented cigaret, Cyrus Epping-Smith, Junior, former gas-meter reader for the town, and now bent on acquiring high-powered motors, Russian wolfhounds, and blondes, reclined in one blue-cushioned chair with his feet planted in another.

"Hullo, Doc," he began pertly, flecking his cigaret ash on the floor as do all good idiots. "Pater's dozing—rather bushed, I'll say. What do you think of this getting an electric jag? Anything to it? They say in New York that it gives a wonderful kick——"

THE doctor, who was on tiptoes in ballet fashion, was spared answering by the stirring of the small figure in the depths of the blue bassinet-bed.

"Is it you, Bellamy?" he asked, "thought you had gone to China."

"It's early, Cy," the doctor watched the worn, square face wrinkle under the impression it was smiling. "Suppose you clear, boy——"

"Oh, I'm going to blow," Cyrus, Junior, answered amiably, "tell the old top not to worry—that's all that ails him—just have him be broad-minded, and everything will come out fine," vanishing with a swagger through the baby-blue draperies.

"And that," commented the doctor, "is your son and heir! In ordinary, healthy circumstances he would have the right to aspire to an overcoat with fur collar and cuffs, a gold tooth or two and a flivver!"

The square-headed, wrinkled little man rose up from his bassinet setting to give a ripping oath of agreement.

"Bellamy," he began excitedly, "help me out of this. I'm slipping pretty fast. Don't know the cause but can't eat, can't sleep, can't enjoy anything—I want to work but there's no more work to do. I can't go out collecting scrap iron—but I'd like to. I don't know how to take care of my millions, have to have brokers and agents—you know. I don't want to doll all up for folks who snub me—I want to be common—that's what I want," lapsing back among the oval-shaped, lace-trimmed pillows with a defeated air.

"You've been so busy having the soul of an adding-machine," diagnosed the doctor, "you haven't realized what has happened. You may as well know now—you're hopeless. You are suffering from an acute case of after-wit. You see things too late. There's a lot of after-wit nowadays. It clouds perspectives and blurs horizons, it will be fine when it has subsided—like a smoke screen obscuring what is actually taking place, and letting every one fight his way about hit or miss—mostly miss. Besides, after-wit is like the spilled pail of milk—quite in vain!"

"There must be something you can do about my head—throbbing, grinding feeling," waving his stubby hands in the air as hysterically as women sometimes do, "eyes aching, hands and feet numb and unsteady—general collapse the wife says, wants me to do Florida next winter—Leota might catch a fine husband! Once caught, the husband must help her with social drag. Great wife of mine, isn't she? But that's not the worst. The boy was married last week to a Winter-Garden blonde—Ramona Sachet—the wife hasn't heard about it yet. I'm not sorry—after the wife and Leota have a good honest cry, I'm prepared to welcome the lady and help support her. That's not it, Bellamy—" trailing off into silence.

"It is after-wit," the doctor supplemented, "selling the people and the government mule-grade stuff at limousine prices, taking ammunition contracts when you only had the apparatus to grind horseradish! Scrambling over every one's rights until you had the ammunition plant apparatus and making shells and making them and not giving a hang who won or who fought as long as your son's hide was safe and your factory buzzing with orders. After-wit, that's your trouble."

"Is it diet or exercise or sea air I need? Hey?" He did not comprehend what was said. "I want to tell you something else," in a whisper, "I'd like nothing better than to let this blonde daughter-in-law get away with the damned money. Before my Maker, this fiddle-dee-dee stuff stifles me. I never counted on the wife's spending my money in any such fool way—I never counted on making as much as I did—once started I had to go on—or else go to jail! It hasn't turned out the way I planned at all. I'm just wishing to be poor," his face cleared as he voiced the desire.

The doctor sat on the edge of the blue-satin counterpane. "You can never do it—believe me. You've put yourself and your family up a blind alley—do you like that term? Into a squirrel cage describes it, too. You're in the sleek class—be resigned, begin learning the tactics of the sleek. You've sacrificed your old-fashioned, reliable roots to become sleek. And there are certain unavoidable consequences of so doing."

"I WANT to work, go around in my shirt-sleeves in my own home. I don't want paid hypocrites bowing and sneering at me. I don't want my family made game of by the people that come and eat my dinners and drink my wines. I want a piece of cold mince pie at bedtime, if I like, get it myself, like I used to do, and be able to turn around without some grinning, uniformed jackass spying on me, and handing me a gold-plated fork and a finger-bowl! I want Sophie to be like she used to be—thought all the time I was making my pile that we'd not change——"

"Of course you thought so—planned to stay right on in the old home circle and put on extra headlights to dazzle 'em. A little brighter fire than any one else, more plush upholstered furniture, a player-piano, fresh strawberries in December, ostrich plumes for Sophie and Leota and a fast motor-cycle for the boy—but the same base-burner-cold-pie-at-bedtime atmosphere for Cyrus! What a fool! Don't you see you've renounced that as definitely as your munition plant has closed down? If you try to evade the pace your money sets for you, your family will

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whip you on to keeping up or else you'll be retired, check-book in hand, to these nursery decorated rooms and here you'll stay until you act pretty according to their standards. You're as helpless as if you put on a belt of gold and walked before a pirate crew suggesting that no one is to be cross to you. You don't suppose the son will stop with Ramona Sachet as a bride—he's liable to beat Nat Goodwin's matrimonial record by two full lengths. Your daughter will marry a bankrupt snob who will teach her how to snub you, the wife will manage to become extremely well trained if not educated and she'll see that your important mission in life is the noiseless signing of checks."

Cyrus bounded out of bed. His face was flushed as if he were dizzy and his rather shrewd eyes narrowed with anger.

"I'll be damned if any of it happens," he said slowly. "I take a vow to go bankrupt before it comes. Do you hear? As if it were any trick to lose a fortune—it's making 'em that takes the brain—do you know what I'll do? I'll lose, deliberately lose down to a certain figure, that figure will give me enough to start again for myself—start right, too. I want a stock farm, blooded horses and cattle, and we'll go there to live, the wife, the daughter, the son and the new daughter if she'll make herself useful. And there-we'll stay—I'll not be stingy—plenty for every one and some to spare, but I'll take care not to be a fool again."

The doctor only shook his head.

"Sophie can have silk dresses and plumes and a good woman to help with the work, but by the jumping John Roger, she'll leave off buying jewelry worth a king's ransom, and having a Hindu Yogi give her soul massage. I'll do what I just said—and you're the only one who knows the secret. I have planned it all out," with a wink of the eye, "watch the grand tumble, and don't be surprised at anything. Let the boy grow round-shouldered stooping over lobster Newberg and light wines with his big doll—God love her, the vampire! Let the wife splurge and be cut right and left, make her glad to be on the farm again where she can slap the pie and cake on the table for folks that appreciate the fact that she made them. Instead of feeding a crew of servants, anything we don't want on the farm we'll pass right back to the pig. Leota will find a sensible husband after she has come back to——"

Bellamy's laugh cut him short. "Dream on," he said satirically.

"IT'S no dream," getting up to shake his stubby fist in the doctor's face, "what I want now is a tonic, something to build me up. I've gotten tense and run down, maybe I need glasses, store teeth, a liver pad—heavens, man, don't care what you do to me, but do something! Look at this gosh-hanged room—why Cleopatra herself wouldn't have stood for it. I'm put to bed the way the wife used to put the kids to sleep—by my hypocrite of a valet with his 'sir,' like the warning purr of a mountain cat! 'Sir'! I'll sir him shortly! I'm manicured and bathed and shampooed and scented up with perfume, dressed and undressed. All I need is to be put on a bottle to complete my senile-decay. And that is the way my money is spent: to take the last ounce of pep out of me. It is going to stop, and father will save enough from the big crash—don't be surprised at anything—to buy the farm and then we'll see——"

The doctor rose. "Is this all you called me for?"

"Isn't it enough?" demanded his patient.

The doctor was writing down a tried and true formula. "Cut out pastry and liquors, murder the valet and get a job weeding onions would help some—but you'll never get rid of the millions. Just remember, never rely on any one but yourself and don't be too bowled over when you fail your own best intentions. Besides, if you try too hard, your loving family will declare you incompetent. You see, Cy, you deliberately planted a pot of gold at the beginning of the rainbow and you didn't calculate on having to march to the end of it and find another!"

Not answering further protestations he left the baby-blue apartment. To have spent over an hour here when the Jamison boy had typhoid, and another lad had gun shot to be cut out of his knee-cap, and a dozen other simple folk waited with their troubles——

Here he was accosted again by Mrs. Epping-Smith. She was playing the girl just now in a gold silk sweater and white serge skirt, her hair dressed to resemble a border of oyster shells.

"Is he very bad?" she demanded airily.

"No, Cyrus never meant to commit a crime," the doctor reassured her looking over his glasses. "Besides, there will always be villains who will live long and prosper, dying to leave questionable fortunes to unquestioning charities. Don't worry, Sophie—let up a little on the blue-satin drapes and the valet if you'd like Cyrus to be good humored, but you've no occasion to plan for mourning."

At which Mrs. Epping-Smith murmured some inarticulate thing, then informed him she had just had a telephone from Mrs. Beach-Eyre of Treadanock, a most select personage, asking for a donation for a convalescent home. Mrs. Epping-Smith was about to drive up with a check for four figures—could she take the doctor home? Oh, no, he had his dear old horse and cart—a story-book equipage these days, to be sure. Come see Cyrus often—he always did him so much good.

Settled in the buggy with Dammit's wearied-of-waiting self beside him and Home Rule headed toward town, the doctor mused over the situation. It occurred to him that Cyrus's plan for a sane future intimated that he had expended a great share of his cunning, cheating instincts in this get-rich-off-Uncle-Sam escapade. Perhaps he had exhausted his baser qualities in the scramble. Now his heyday of plenty was at hand, he was not, as his townsman dubbed him, a close-fisted,

"I don't want to doll all up for folks who snub me—I want to be common—that's what I want"

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hide-bound villain with a "two for me and half of a one for you" platform. From being the child of lumber people with dragging a neck-yoke as a recreation and living on black bread and milk and flog-gings, he now had time to sit back and have his soul burnished up in bright, charitable colors.

Time enough and money enough and sufficient good to be a genial, rather vulgar benefactor with charity for all and malice only for those who would not accept it. He could become a fond parent and an admiring husband, indulge in Indian summer courtship if his wife permitted, even grow lenient regarding household pets and symphony concerts, a bit of a judge as to women's hats and the Sunday sermon, offer a village improvement prize and so on.

But this could never be, for it bespoke the even, middle paths, and Cyrus from the depths had suddenly soared to the clouds and there he would remain—or fall again to the depths and take the consequences.

The news of young Smith's marriage to Ramona Sachet only disgusted Quimby further. Such a disgrace for such a little town! They said there was no need of a comic opera company's ever coming to Quimby as long as the Epping-Smiths were determined to make a poppy-show of themselves. When rumors reached the town of the son's squandering fifty thousand on his bride, despite his mother's foaming protests, the town drew its skirts aside rather prudishly and said "those Smiths were horrid."

II

THE doctor did not see Cyrus until he had wintered in Florida with the rest of the sand lizards, and his daughter had won a husband in more acute need of financial backing than Leota was of social drag. It was a successful season, all told, with the C. Epping-Smiths billeted in the most expensive hostelry the Florida coast could boast of possessing.

The vampire daughter-in-law took the holidays as an auspicious time to depart for Reno while her father-in-law came across with handsome alimony and all court costs. Reading of the affair, Doctor Bellamy remarked to Dammit:

"One down, another come on—he's trying to go broke, and anything is cheap at half the price, these days!"

At this interesting point, the Epping-Smiths returned to Castlecrest for Leota's marriage to Appleby Van Brilliant, Leota wishing to be married in her "dear old home"—almost two years of age and not quite completed as regarded the servants' quarters.

The Van Brilliant alliance relieved Cyrus of half a million at the outset with the definite promise of relieving him of half a million more before the first year had ended. When he discovered Van Brilliant had concealed the largest of his debts until the wedding ceremony had taken place, he waxed genial toward him and drove him down to Doctor Bellamy's to be treated for heart trouble, whispering the glad news to the doctor in an off moment.

Meanwhile Mrs. C. Epping-Smith by virtue of her daughter's marriage (three thousand orchids used in the decorations) —had achieved a standing among a certain tart, smart set who were financially embarrassed. These seconds found it a great lark and convenience to come and stay at Castlecrest "as long as we can stand it; sort of like diving under the water for pennies, you know—a time limit to coming up for air" as they charitably said the moment they had driven out of the grounds.

Cyrus was thinner, the doctor noted, and old-looking enough for sixty-five, sluggish in actions, proof that the tactics of the sleek had gained ground. There was something pathetic about his resignation, like a child who has been irrefutably put in the wrong by a brutish grown-up.

He wrote a check for five thousand for the doctor's poor, he aimlessly explained, and when it was accepted he seemed as pleased as Punch and would have lingered to visit, only his son-in-law bustled him into the motor and drove him back to captivity.

THE wine steward, Brabson, cut up the next caper to bring the Epping-Smiths into the limelight. This time a metropolitan weekly gave it a few scathing paragraphs which caused Mrs. Epping-Smith much satisfaction. For Brabson, with the Japanese butler and French chef as accomplices, emptied the wine cellar of its contents during the family's absence, selling it for double the price and then departing for unknown lands.

As if good fortune never came singly, Mrs. Epping-Smith "after buying back our own stock at terrific prices, my dears—fancy that—a fence for liquors—what are we coming to"—Mrs. Epping-Smith was robbed of her sapphires while staying at the St. Wreckus, the guest of her daughter, Mrs. Appleby Van Brilliant. This was reported by associated press, a half-column story topped off by Mrs. Epping-Smith's photograph and casual mention of Mr. Epping-Smith's immediate purchase of rare pigeon-blood rubies as a consolation present to the bereaved.

The son-in-law now informed them they must cease vulgar publicity, no matter what might come. At which the son and heir plunged into a gambling escapade, his father covering the deficit and muzzling the press and police while the affair was whispered among the élite, giving a correct impression of the retiring nature of all true profiteers!

A week later C. Epping-Smith's brokers made a lucky coup on the market and retrieved every last sou C. Epping-Smith had managed to lose.

That summer when Doctor Bellamy wondered which would last the longer, Home Rule or the old-fashioned buggy, Castlecrest took on an extra sheaf of gaiety in the form of a large and lasting house-party.

The doctor had no opportunity to ask Cyrus as to his bank-account and its depletion until late one July night when he was sent for to see a maid who was taken seriously ill. Cyrus and the housekeeper waited on the doctor, and the latter noticed how Cyrus's hands trembled yet how polished were his nails, how his dressing-gown was of womanish silk, his hair violet-scented and his eyes bleared and wistful.

After-wit was slowly making inroads.

When the maid rested easily, Cyrus persuaded the old gentleman to drink some sherry. They went into the breakfast-room with its peculiarly irritating centerpiece on the mahogany table—pink china chrysanthemums and geisha maids in pale gold buzzing about on a huge lacquer tray—while Cyrus poured the wine with an unsteady hand and then sat opposite the doctor watching him curiously.

"I've not done it yet," he said, warding off the question, "but I will. Soon enough, too."

"Will you?"

"I'm going to give you some more for the poor—and something for yourself—you spend every cent on other people."

The doctor raised a protesting hand. "As long as I hand back your money to the people you took it from, I'll take a hundred thousand. But I want my Sunday roasts and occasional old books to come from my own sort. Thanks, just the same."

Without answering, Cyrus went into the oppressive stage library and wrote a check for twenty thousand, laying it at the doctor's place.

"I tell you I'm doing it," he insisted, "there—use it all for your beggars if you like, you fine old ogre. But I can't get a grip on myself—feel unnerved, afraid of my shadow, seen a dozen specialists, been X-rayed, massaged, had 'em working in droves, dieted, exercised—but I need to get back to the land. It is as the old man said, 'there's virtue in just the airth'—so I'm hanging on here and getting ready to sink the whole fortune in a single blow. The fools don't suspect. But I've given up the thought of Leota's coming with me on the farm—she's gone on a new tangent with her husband. I've had to give up any hope that the wife would come, too. I don't call her that any more—she is the 'gimme girl' to me—do you get it? Gimme this and gimme that and gimme everything—that is all I'm good for in her eyes," his square frowsly little head sunk down as if he were telling of her death instead of her social life. "I thought they'd be ready to chuck this and come back to the farm, live like I told you. But there's not a chance for it. As long as I can stake 'em, they'll not let me stake myself. So I'll jump the claim—then they'll let me go but go alone. I've given up the family farm idea—it'll be Cy Smith single-handed."

"WHAT will they do?" the doctor was slipping the old gold ring from one little finger to the other.

"Van Brilliant will throw Leota over when the goose that handed him golden eggs begins handing him plain hard-boiled ones," chuckling at the idea; "as for the boy—well, I dunno, maybe he'll pull out and join me. I kind of bank on him—can't seem to help it. But the gimme girl—I mean the wife—she and Leota will join forces to land some one else for Leota—you see, they've learned just how it is done."

"You'll never go through with any of it," the doctor pushed back his chair with disregard for his elegant background, "and don't try—you may get into a box you can't get out of. You can no more change your destiny than a mosquito can box an elephant."

"You mean you'd submit to—to this?" Cyrus pointed about the room, "when by losing money you'd be able to get back where you could take root once more?"

"You'll have to follow the rainbow trail

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"Don't you want to be first lady of Balkan land, my little ball-and-chain——I mean my dear wife?"

to the end, as I told you, and find another hellish pot of gold at the finish. It's up to you to pay the price. Of course you'll never take root again. You'll die in this boudoir setting and the sooner you're resigned to it, the sooner you'll die, and be presented with the most elaborate monument a man was ever tortured with having. The final stone wall of blind alley."

This time Cyrus did not curse or vigorously protest. He trembled as he poured more wine. "Will—will—" he said presently in muffled fashion, "watch me—will——"

III

THE advent of a Kentucky colonel financier, Lance D'Avelyn Darsie, at Castlecrest was kept properly quiet. The colonel, discovered by the Epping-Smiths in New York, was on terms of intimacy with the crowned heads of Europe equaled only by those of the late Tom Thumb! He also had his finger on the pulse of the world's money markets. He was one of those suave creations who can write *vers libre* on his cuff, make a dowager think herself a sub-deb, charm a Greek savant's heart by an intelligent discussion on Euripides, and convince hard-headed men of affairs just wherein lay investment's brightest prospects.

Meeting the colonel due to a poison ivy disaster during a basket picnic, Doctor Bellamy objected to him on the ground that he took too great pains to account for his boyhood years. There seemed to be a mass of unnecessary detail related to explain the exact abode and habits of the overly virtuous colonel from the days of standing at his mother's knee to those of becoming Mrs. Epping-Smith's pet tea-turtle.

Although eleven trunks of valuables belonging to Lance D'Avelyn Darsie were lodged in the guest apartments of Castlecrest while family crests played an important part in decorating even his pajama pockets, the doctor failed to be impressed with the new acquisition. Such a wonderful acquisition for such a little town!

While Cyrus was still bent on tossing his millions about like ten-pins from a belting hand and the colonel was a permanent fixture upon the gimme girl's romantic doorstep, the first "decent batch of guests, take it by and large" came to Castlecrest for the house-party—a wonderful house-party for such a little town.

Among them was the metropolitan portrait painter who was to practise on members of the family and then achieve a masterpiece—painting the gimme girl's pet Pekinese in the panels of her boudoir. A gold-and-iris effect with apple-blossom motif and the "dear one's wee face" surrounded by mandarin ducks was the large idea, so Doctor Bellamy was informed.

Mrs. Epping-Smith, *alias* the gimme girl, had come on socially, the doctor noted. There was an air of being socially fit about her, even her frocks had a properly restrained richness indicative that she had dozens upon dozens of lovelier, more bewildering creations hanging in her clothes-room.

The Van Brilliants were on hand to help the gimme girl over any croppers occurring during the house-party and young Epping-Smith, just engaged to an artists' model, had come on to enjoy the affair. There were no noticeably henna-ed dowagers among the guests or overly bright-eyed young women with second-hand finery and cleaned gloves and corresponding seconds in the male line. The subdued, semi-starved, low voiced, stained-glass windowed atmosphere of the bored aristocracy pervaded the entire outfit while Cyrus took refuge in the "deer park," a trembling yet defiant little man who one time so clearly whistled "I Can't Change My Rough and Rowdy Ways," as he made his round of scrap-iron collecting.

THE culminating glory of the house-party was to be a paper chase, planned by the colonel, which was to embrace every corner, crook and cranny of the entire estate with Appleby Van Brilliant to act as Lord of Misrule!

Therefore, as Mrs. Epping-Smith told the doctor, he must be a "love" and cure up smarting arms and ankles instanter so every one could enjoy themselves and this would be the last time she ever existed without having a residence nurse at Castlecrest!

It was a particularly lovely July night, that of the paper chase. Sitting on his side porch, his dog snoring hoarsely at his feet, and Eccles reading in the summer house, the doctor forgot the day's cares and to-morrow's calls in thinking of the carnival at Castlecrest. He, too, agreed with the town—that the Epping-Smiths were as good as a comic opera troupe backed by a magician.

"A paper chase," he murmured, Dammit stirring at the sound, "and Cy thinks he can get back to the land——"

There was a purring motor entry at the rear, one of those roadsters with a mile-a-minute speed. Eccles came lumbering around to inform him:

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"We've stowed Colonel Darsie in the coal-bin," as if it were no more unusual than a winter's fuel supply, "a bad egg, too! Couldn't keep 'im at Castlecrest, she wanted the fun to go on regardless—exclusive secrecy, you know. They couldn't put 'im in the town jail—please the town too well! Get noised about. So she sent 'im 'ere, detectives along, no need to be alarmed—'e is 'andcuffed and can't play with matches or get vicious with an ax."

"Have you been drinking again?" the doctor sprang up in alarm.

A suave gentleman, supposedly a guest at Castlecrest, rounded the corner to show his police badge. Unpleasant happening, but fortunate for every one—except the colonel. The suave gentleman and a companion who were detailed at Castlecrest to watch servants, jewelry and guests, had sudden doubts as to the colonel. Investigation and a dictagraph proved him a king highbinder, confidence man on a daring, lavish scale, wanted for several other jobs. No publicity was Mrs. Epping-Smith's wish, not a single sounding of the tocsin.

The colonel had been about to pull the string on the Epping-Smith money-bag. Mr. Epping-Smith in a state of drunken misjudgment had actually signed away millions, the colonel had on his person negotiable securities amounting to—wiser not to give details. Would Doctor Bellamy allow them to keep the colonel in the cellar until early morning? His disappearance from the paper chase was accounted for by a fictitious wire calling him to a sick friend. Mrs. Epping-Smith would not be unmindful of the doctor's courtesy, she knew she could trust him, etc., etc.

"If the colonel can stand it, so can I," was the doctor's sole comment.

Whereupon one soft-shoed gentleman returned to Castlecrest and the other took up his post outside the cellar door with Eccles hovering about in hope of achieving heroics, and both marveled at the doctor's customary bed-time routine being undisturbed even to apple-eating, star-gazing and walking Dammit around the square.

At four A. M. according to the pet rooster, the gimme girl surrounded by her daughter, and daughter's husband, and her son, and squired by the other detective, to say nothing of a very addled, rumpled C. Epping-Smith, made their appearance at the doctor's cellar door.

"Tell him to come down at once—bring him right up," began the gimme girl, "he must help us—the wretch, I'll see him tortured."

WHEREUPON Eccles mounted the stairs for the doctor while the detectives unfastened the cellar door and, gun and flashlight on high, went in search of the colonel.

When Doctor Bellamy reached his usually placid back steps, he came upon a scene which gave him the "thrill of his young life" as Eccles insisted.

The gimme girl was standing in the waning moonlight, wearing her imported costume entitled Forbidden Fruit. It consisted of gold-cloth shot with blazing red-and-purple, and Persian trousers crusted with semi-precious stones, the trousers being linked together just below the knees with rhinestone chains. Purple, curled-up-toed slippers and a head-dress resembling an exploded hen completed the effect. Standing before her and attempting to feign complete champagne oblivion to everything which had or was taking place was C. Epping-Smith, senior, his silly fancy costume, representing Robin Hood, bulging with ludicrous effect.

"Quite barmy, both of 'em," also according to Eccles.

The detectives were on either side of the calm, cynical colonel who was slightly soiled here and there from his siesta in the coal-bin, while Leota Van Brilliant, done up to the last ounce in a green bustle gown, and her husband, and brother clustered around the gimme girl as if to lend moral support to the occasion.

"Colonel—great friend of mine," Cyrus began, pointing an amiable finger at the prisoner, "everybody against him—great heart he has—champion of weaker nations—yessir—going to buy Balkan state free from its oppressor—yessir—oppressor—yessir—oppressor—" he was stopped in this riming delirium by his daughter, who shook him, saying:

"Come, papa, get through explaining—Mama wants to talk."

"GOING to make me president of republic—had inside stuff about condishuns—yessir—glad to have financed under dog—can't see any objectshuns—can you—don't you want to be first lady in Balkan land, my little ball-and-chain—I mean my gimme girl—I mean my dear wife? No, she evidently does not. Why, doctor," with falsetto giggle, "delighted—meant to have you in my cabinet when we got things underway—certainly did——"

"Fancy listening to such twaddle—you ninny," a hard glow was in the gimme girl's cheeks, overstepping even the rouge boundaries.

"You've been duped by an international swindler," his son-in-law was exasperated to the last black pearl in his tie-pin. "He's told you fairy-tales—of all the unreal schemes—regular ten, twenty, thirty cent melodrama—suppose he had really gotten away with it?"

Watching closely, the doctor saw the baffled expression in the little man's square face. After all, had Cyrus tried to escape the inevitable? This snubbed, disillusioned little millionaire profiteerer who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage and determined to exchange the latter for the former or know the reason why! Was there no cure for his after-wit?

"It could have been a mammoth swindle," a detective was saying, "we pulled it off rather neatly—waited until the party was in full swing and Mr. Smith had handed over the last security—the colonel was just getting ready to blow. The only thing that gets me talking with both hands is how Mr. Epping-Smith ever fell for it. Well, Colonel Lance D'Avelyn Darsie *alias* Old Activity *alias* Buzz McCarthy *alias* Saintly Sawyer *alias* Hugh Burdette—it'll be a long 'book' for you, this time. You've had a nice summer vacation anyhow, ain't you?"

"Are you sure he isn't straight?" Cyrus protested.

An angry roar answered him, causing even the colonel to smile. There was an unpleasant, dangerous glint in the gimme girl's eyes. She came nearer her husband, looking down at him intently.

"You've seemed so queer lately," she said slowly, "every one has noticed it—very queer, talking of going to live on a farm and not wanting to be rich—Leota and I have remarked about it. So has Leota's husband and your own son."

"Yes, indeed," they chorused.

"That isn't normal, Cyrus, I do believe you need a long rest," her hard, eager hand attempting to stroke his forehead, the rings on her fingers flashing like triumphant little demons; "you've worked so hard for so long your judgment is not the same. Fancy being taken in by such a fantastic story—of course we women aren't supposed to know about business—but you, Cyrus—I shudder to think of your mental condition—oh, I can hardly bear it! My poor husband, my poor, mad husband!"

That last adjective cured Cyrus Epping-Smith of after-wit!

It brought Doctor Bellamy to the rescue to pronounce him cured. Just as it suggested pleasant possibilities to the others.

"Come, Cy, I've always warned you it takes a gentleman to drink wine," the doctor interrupted, "this thing is unfortunate and unusual but easily explained." Here he became noticeably cross-eyed, indicative of deliberately lying to save the other fellow. "Cy has been drinking champagne, cordials and other stuff, and it has muddled his judgment and made him credulous to almost anything. It is no odder than the way his wife absorbed the colonel's compliments—no one seems to have thought of that. Cyrus has been duped by a man his wife insisted on having in her home," with telling emphasis, "besides, he's made money so rapidly he has not realized that it is his duty to begin counting it; but now that he will stop drinking these tizzy things, he'll begin."

As he finished there came the same hard, dangerous glint into C. Epping-Smith's eyes as had been in his wife's. It was the shrewd gleam which appears when one good warrior is about to adopt the tactics of his foe—and win.

"Let us be honest," finished the doctor, "and admit that Cyrus has been on one continual drunk ever since this house-party, and let us take off our hats to the colonel for keeping him that way."

STILL cross-eyed, he plunged into a technical, awesome explanation of what liquor could do to a brain when said brain's owner no longer indulged in muscular exercise but sat guzzling the stuff in sunken-garden retreats. Life would appear on an unreal and exaggerated canvas—a fairy-tale setting. Small wonder, with Cyrus's generous nature, his millions, his addled brain, his wife's strange preference for this imposter, that he should have believed in him—and so on. Once the wine cellars were abolished at Castlecrest and Cyrus given all the lists of house-guests for final judgment, nothing of this sort could ever happen again.

There was nothing to do but accept the doctor's theory—at which they all rebelled except the colonel, who remained neutral, seeing there was no automatic gun placed at his disposal.

"Let him stay overnight and sober up," the doctor advised, putting a protecting hand on Cyrus's collar.

So they left him to be escorted up to the old-fashioned guest-room. A summer rain

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crept up to patter consolingly on the roof and bring the smell of honeysuckle and roses through the opened windows.

The doctor put his hands on Cyrus's shoulders and shook him, now fiercely, now kindly.

"You after-wit fool," he said, "what an escape—don't put it up to me again—I can't save you twice. What chance would an old country doctor have against city alienists?"

HIS guest stared at him. Presently he said, "Yes—and she'd call 'em in! I believe it now. She'd like to prove me incompetent as long as I threatened to stop her spending. So, they'd shove me into a sanatorium! As if I hadn't known the colonel's number—played to meet him and have him charm the gimme girl and have her invite him here—I drank wine and listened to his nonsense and agreed to the Balkan bubble. He thought me a backwoods rube. He planned for his getaway—I knew it. I thought luck was with me until she had the plain-clothes men come down to watch the jewelry—then I was afraid the jig was up. It turned out as you said," he almost snarled as if the doctor were somewhat responsible. "What a cheap, overdone thing it was—eh—a fool scheme—" throwing himself across the bed to sob [hoarse, deep cries of an enraged yet guilty soul.

When Cyrus Epping-Smith rose from the bed there was a new and terrible expression on his face—that of vindictive, parsimonious tyranny. It boded neither joy nor mercy for those who lived under his roof. He had accepted defeat—but he would force his family to accept it with him. Never again would he try to become a man of normal joys and activities. Instead, he would hoard his millions as he once hoarded his junk and scrap-iron, he would be a business shark, play a big-fish-swallow-little-fish game, trust no one, love no one, rejoice in retrenching in his way of living, force upon his family a systematic, iron-clad poverty which they would be obliged to accept and writhe in the so-doing, knowing the millions were multiplying. There would be no hint of being incompetent from now on.

All the force and brain of this square-headed little man was rampant as he told the doctor his intentions. He had turned miser-all-in-a-minute just as he had turned Midas-all-in-a-minute. Extremes were his only boundary lines; very well, he would see that he kept to extremes. There would be no more poor checks for Bellamy, not a one, sir, he wanted as cheap a rate for an office call as the Mulligans who lived in an alley—why not, sir? He wanted meager meals and old clothes, meager and old everything. And more money in unspent, tragic piles! A war profiteerer was he? Good. He would become a world financier before another five years—and not a stick of kindling wood nor bar of soap was to be wasted. Not one.

He would be known as the millionaire who dined off watercress and boiled potatoes and wore the same shoes until no cobbler could repair them and his wife would keep her jewelry in the vault and go look at it once in a while—but that would be all. He would cancel every subscription to charity he had signed, he'd sell Castlecrest and go live in New York, to be near business. The dogs' meat his wife now ordered would be fine enough for the family table—and everything on that same reduced scale. He would become a wonderful miser for such a little town!

He waited for the doctor's opinion.

"I'd say," the doctor said with both pity and scorn, "you were cured of after-wit. And I've done everything I can ever do for you."

The gimme girl called for her husband that next noon, still unnerved by the shock but thankful the scoundrel was under lock and key. She was apprehensive as to Cyrus' ability to keep his fortune intact—what did the doctor *really* think?

She asked to have Eccles drive home with them because she wanted to shower the doctor with the fruit and flowers remaining from the carnival; he could distribute them among his poor sick. At which her husband took pains to remark that as long as the fruit and flowers would spoil unless some one did distribute them, it was all right for Eccles to come along—the doctor might as well have them.

Little she knew it would be the last carnival Castlecrest would ever witness under her régime. As her husband's fortune increased, so would her shabbiness and discomfort. Now that he had become a trifle mad, the business world would hail him as conquerer and king, and she would be powerless to even hint of her opinion!

Returning with the spoils, the doctor, for once frankly curious, asked Eccles if Mr. and Mrs. Epping-Smith had had much to say to each other.

"I wouldn't say they talked regular," Eccles admitted; "you might put it this way—they treated each other to broken doses of advice with the mister finishing strong!"

Having parceled out the fruit and flowers and about to distribute them, the doctor reflected a moment.

"Dammit," he remarked to his dog, "this is the last batch of give-aways we'll ever see from the Epping-Smiths. Lordy, I don't know whether I'd feel sorrier for Cyrus if Sophie had declared him insane or whether I'll feel sorrier for Sophie now Cyrus declares himself a miser—anyhow, isn't this a wonderful summer's day for such a little town?"

"Dammit," he remarked to the dog, "this is the last batch of give-aways we'll ever see from the Eppington-Smiths."

ADMIRERS of old Doctor Bellamy's handling of the Epping-Smiths' case are justified in looking forward with relish to the next Bartley story, "Poor Men's Orchids," in which the Doctor is called upon to treat a pet panther.

This singular pet, Chérie by name, is the valued property of Thalia Basset and Jim Cooper, two ultra-modern young people who pose as twentieth century sweethearts. Their advanced ideas, the opposition of their parents, and the complications caused by Chérie provide a situation that tests the Doctor's patient resourcefulness to the utmost.

"Poor Men's Orchids" will appear in an early issue of EVERYBODY'S.

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If Winter Comes

By A. S. M. Hutchinson

Author of "Once Aboard the Lugger," "The Happy Warrior," etc.

Chapter Six

Nona

I

SABRE, ambling his bicycle along the pleasant lanes toward Tidborough one fine morning in the early summer of 1912, was met in his thoughts by observation, as he topped a rise, of the galloping progress of the light railway that was to link up the Penny Green Garden Home with Tidborough and Chovensbury. In the two years since Lord Tybar had, as he had said, beneficially exercised his ancestors in their graves by selling the land on which the Garden Home Development was to develop, Penny Green Garden Home had sprung into being at an astonishing pace.

The great thing now was the railway.

And the railway's unsightly indications strewn across the countryside—ballast-heaps, excavations, noisy stationary engines, hand-propelled barrows bumping along toy lines, gangs of men at labor with pick and shovel—met Sabre's thoughts on this June morning because he was thinking of the Penny Green Garden Home and of Mabel and of himself in connection with the Penny Green Garden Home.

Puzzling thoughts.

Here was a subject, this ambitiously projected and astonishingly-popular Garden Home springing up at their very doors, that interested him and that intensely interested Mabel, and yet it could never be mentioned between them without—— Only that very morning at breakfast. And June—he always remembered it—was the anniversary month of their wedding. Eight years ago. Eight years . . .

II

WHAT interested Sabre in the Garden Home was not the settlement itself—he rather hated the idea of Penny Green being neighbored and overrun by crowds of all sorts of people—but the causes that gave rise to the modern movement of which it was a shining example. The causes had their place in one of the sections he had planned for "England" and it encouraged his ideas for that section to see the results here at his doors. Overcrowding in the towns; the desire of men to get away from their place of business; the increasing pressure of business and the increasing recreational variety of life that, deepening and widening through the years, actuated the desire; the extension of traffic facilities that permitted the desire; all the modern tendencies that made work less of a pleasure and more of a toil—and out of that the whole absorbing question of the decay of joy in craftmanship, and why. Jolly interesting!

II

THE STORY

IN THE year 1912, Mark Sabre, at the age of thirty-four, is discovered by an old preparatory-school classmate, one Hapgood, a solicitor, living in a pleasantly picturesque English country town, Penny Green, suburb of the city of Tidborough. Hapgood reports that Sabre's ceaseless inquiry into causes and his sympathetic understanding of people, traits that earned for him the nickname of Puzzlehead when at school, are still paramount characteristics, that his wife, Mabel, is a distinctly nice sort of girl, and that they have no children.

In business Sabre is associated with the old house of Fortune, East & Sabre, ecclesiastical and scholastic furnishers and designers, who have been long established in Tidborough and whose enviable prestige in their line extends throughout the Empire. Something of the difference in interests and temperament between Mark and his wife is brought out in the numerous annoyances that her model housekeeping causes him, by his distaste for her fondness for gossip and the exclusive society of social equals, by her practicality and her lack of imagination.

Mabel is indifferent to Mark's fondness for books, his constant groping for light on the odd business of life, his seemingly commonplace friends, and his occasional sallies of humorous comment on subjects most grave and important from her point of view. His habit of referring to her two faultlessly trained maids as High Jinks and Low Jinks is particularly obnoxious to her, as is also his low taste for the bicycle, on which he prefers to make his daily trips to and from Tidborough.

That part of his work to which Sabre brings special enthusiasm is the publication of educational text-books, invariably referred to by Mabel as "those lesson books," a term of disdain applied to even his projected masterpiece, which is to be known as just "England," or "Sabre's England."

These were the pictures and the stories Sabre saw in the roads and avenues and residences and public buildings leaping from mud and chaos into order and activity in the Garden Home; these were the reasons the thing interested him and why he rather enjoyed seeing it springing up about him. But these, he thought as he rode along, were not the reasons the thing interested Mabel. And when he mentioned them to her, and when she, for her part, spoke of it to him—and she was always speaking of it—the reasons for her enthusiasm retired him at once into a shell.

Funny state of affairs.

Mabel was convinced he loathed and detested the Penny Green Garden Home Development; and actually he rather liked the Penny Green Garden Home Development; and yet he couldn't tell her so; and she did not understand in the least when he tried to tell her so. Funny. Eight years ago this month.

His thoughts went on: And, come to think of it, the relations between them were precisely similar in regard to nearly everything they ever discussed. And yet they would be called, and were, a perfectly happy couple. Perfectly? Was every happy married couple just what they were? Was married happiness, then, merely the negation of violent unhappiness? Merely not beating your wife, and your wife not drinking or running up debts? He thought: "No, by God, there's something more in it than that." And then his forehead wrinkled up in his characteristic habit and he thought: "Of course, it's my fault. It isn't only this dashed Garden Home. It's everything. It isn't only once. It's always. It can't possibly be her fault always. It's mine. I can see that.

"Take this morning at breakfast. Perfectly good temper both of us. Then she said: 'Those houses in King's Close are going to be eighty pounds a year; and, what do you think, Mrs. Toller is going to take one!' Immediately I was riled. Why should I get riled because she says that Mrs. Toller is going to take a house for eighty pounds a year? I just rustled the newspaper. Why on earth couldn't I say 'Good Lord, is she?' or something like that? Why on earth couldn't I even not rustle the newspaper? She knows what it means when I rustle the paper. I meant her to know. Why should I? It's the easiest thing on earth for me to respond to what she says. I know perfectly well what she's getting at. I could easily have said that Mrs. Toller would have old Toller in the workhouse one of these days if he didn't watch it. I could have said 'She'll be keeping three servants next and she can't keep one as it is.' Mabel would have loved that. She'd have laughed."

He thought: "Why *should* she love that sort of tripe—gossip?"

He thought: "Damn it, why *shouldn't* she? Why should I mind? Why should I rustle the newspaper? She can't enter into things that interest me; but I can, I could, enter into things that interest her. Why don't I? Of course I can see perfectly clearly how she looks at things. It's just as rotten for her that I don't talk with her about her ideas as it is rotten for me that she doesn't see my ideas. And it isn't rotten for me. I don't mind it. I don't expect it. I don't expect it. . . ."

And at that precise moment of his thoughts, the garrulous Hapgood, seeing his face, could have said to another, as he said before: "There! See what I mean? Looks as though he'd lost something and was wondering where it was. Ha!"

III

A GENIAL shouting and the clatter of agitated hoofs jerked Sabre from his thoughts.

"Hullo! Hi! Help! Out collision-mats! Stop the cab! Look out, Sabre! *Sabre!*"

He suddenly became aware—and he jammed on his brakes and dismounted by straddling a leg to the ground—that in the narrow lane he was between two plunging horses. Their riders had divided to make way for his bemused approach. They had violently sundered, expecting him to stop until he was almost on top of them, and one of the pair was now engaged in placating his horse, which resented this sudden snatching at bit and

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Sabre thought that the riders, with their horses, made the most striking, and somehow moving, picture of virile and graceful beauty he could ever have imagined.

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prick of spur, and persuading it to return to the level road.

On one side the lane was banked steeply up in a cutting. The horse of the rider on this side stood on its hind legs and appeared to be performing a series of postman's double-knocks on the bank with its forelegs. Lord Tybar, who bestrode it, and who did not seem to be at all concened by his horse copying a postman, looked over his shoulder at Sabre, showing an amused grin, and said, "Thanks, Sabre. This is jolly. I like this. Come on, old girl. This way down. Keep passing on, please."

The old girl, an extraordinarily big and handsome chestnut mare, dropped her forelegs to the level of the road, where she exchanged the postman's knocking for a complicated and exceedingly nimble dance, largely on two legs.

Lord Tybar, against her evident intentions, skilfully directed the steps of this dance into a turning movement so that she and her rider now faced Sabre; and while she bounded through the concluding movements of the *pas seul* he continued in the same whimsical tone and with the same engaging smile: "Thanks still more, Sabre. This is extraordinarily good for the liver. Devilish graceful, aren't I? See, I'm only holding on with one hand! Marvelous. No charge for this." And as the mare came to rest and quivered at Sabre with her beautiful nostrils, "Ah, the music's stopped. Delicious. How well your step suits mine!"

"Ass!" laughed a voice above them; and Sabre, who had almost forgotten there was another horse when he had abruptly wakened and dismounted, looked up at it.

The other horse was standing with complete and entirely unconcerned statuesqueness on the low bank which bounded the lane on his other side. Lady Tybar had taken it, or it had taken Lady Tybar, out of danger in a sideways bound, and horse and rider remained precisely where the sideways bound had taken them as if it were exactly where they had intended to go all that morning and as if they were now settled there for all time as a living equestrian statue: a singularly striking and beautiful statue.

"WE ARE up here," said Lady Tybar. Her voice had a very clear, fine note. "We are rather beautiful up here, don't you think? Rather darlings? No one takes the faintest notice of us; we might be off the earth. But we don't mind a bit. Hullo, Derry and Toms, Marko is actually taking off his hat to us. Bow, Derry."

Her horse, as if he perfectly understood, tossed his head, and she drew attention to it with a deprecatory little gesture of her hand and then said: "Shall we come down now? Is your dance quite finished, Tony? Are you content, Marko? All right. We'll descend. This is us descending. Lady Tybar, who is a superb horsewoman, descending a precipice on her beautiful half-bred Derry and Toms, a winner at several shows."

Derry and Toms stepped down off the bank with complete assurance and superb dignity. With equal precision, moving his feet as though there were marked for them certain exact spots which he covered with infinite lightness and exactitude, he turned about and stood beside his partner in exquisite and immobile pose.

IV

THUS the two riders faced Sabre, smiling upon him. He stood holding his bicycle immediately in front of them. The mare continued to quiver her beautiful nostrils at him; every now and then she blew a little agitated puff through them, causing them to expand and reveal yet more exquisitely their glorious softness and delicacy.

Sabre thought that the riders, with their horses, made the most striking, and somehow moving, picture of virile and graceful beauty he could ever have imagined.

Lord Tybar, who was thirty-two, was debonnair and attractive of countenance to a degree. His eyes, which were gray, were extraordinarily mirthful, mischievous. A supremely airy and careless and bold spirit looked through those eyes and shone through them flashes and glints and sparkles of diamond light. His face was thin and of tanned olive. His face seemed to say to the world, challengingly, "I am here! Now!" His face seemed to say to the world, "I am here! I have arrived! Bring out your best and watch me!" There were people—women—who said he had a cruel mouth. They said this, not with censure or regret, but with a deliciously fearful rapture as though the cruel mouth (if it was cruel) were not the least part of his attraction.

Lord Tybar's lady, who was twenty-nine, carried in her countenance and in her hair the pleasing complement of her lord's tan and olive hue and of his cropped black poll. She was extraordinarily fair. Her skin was of the hue, and of the sheen, of creamy silk, and glowed beneath its hue. It presented amazing delicacy and yet an exquisite firmness. Children, playing with her, and she delighted in playing with children (but she was childless) often asked to stroke her face. They would stare at her face in that immensely absorbed way in which children stare, and then ask to touch her face and just stroke it; their baby fingers were not more softly silken. Of her hair Lady Tybar had said frequently, from her girlhood upward, that it was "a most sickening nuisance." She bound it tightly as if to punish and be firm with the sickening nuisance that it was to her. And these close gleaming plaits and coils children also liked to touch with their soft fingers.

Her name was Nona.

Out of a hundred people who passed her by quite a considerable number would have denied that she was pretty. Her face was round and saucy rather than oval and classical. Incontestable the striking attraction of her complexion and of her hair; but not pretty—quite a number would have said. She had rather a "cheeky" face they would have said, and did say—if you call that pretty, they would have said.

Sabre called it pretty.

V

UNTIL this moment, standing there with his bicycle, she on her beautiful horse, he had not seen her, nor Lord Tybar, for two years. They had been traveling. Now seeing her, thus unexpectedly and thus gallantly environed, his mind, with that astonishing precision of detail and capriciousness of selection with which the mind retains pictures, reproduced certain masculine discussion of her looks at a time when, as Nona Holiday of Chovensbury Court, daughter of Sir Haddon Holiday, M. P. for Tidborough, she had contributed to local gossip by becoming engaged to Lord Tybar.

"Pretty girl, you know," masculine discussion had said; and Sabre had thought "Fools!"

"Oh, hardly pretty," others had maintained; and again "Fools!" he had thought. "Pretty—*pretty!* Hardly pretty—*hardly pretty!*" Furious, he had flung away from them.

The time and the place of the discussion had been when the news of her engagement had just been brought into the clubhouse of the Penny Green Golf Club. He had flung out into the rain which had caused the pavilion to be crowded. Fools! Was she pretty! Did they mean to say they couldn't see in her face what he saw in her face? And then he thought: "But of course they haven't loved her. It's nothing to them what they've only just heard, but what she told me herself this morning. And she knew what it meant to me when she told me. Although we said nothing. Of course I see her differently."

He saw her "differently" now after two years of not seeing her, and ten years since that day of gossip at the golf club. Pretty! Strange how he could always remember that smell of the rain as he had come out of the clubhouse—and a strange fragrance in the air as now he looked upon her——

UPON the warm and trembling air, as he stood with his bicycle before the horses, was borne to him savor of hay newly turned in the fields about, and of high springtide blowing in the hedgerows; and with them delicious essence from the warm, gleaming bodies of the horses, and pungent flavor of the saddlery, and the mare's sweet breath puffed close to his face in little gusty agitations.

The shining, tingling picture of strength and beauty superbly modeled, that the riders and their horses made, seemed, as it were, to arise out of, and be suspended shimmering in the heart of, the warm incense that he savored. So when a sorcerer casts spiced herbs upon the flame, and scented vapor uprises, and in the vapor images appear.

Exquisite picture of strength and beauty superbly modeled: the horses' glossy coats glinting all a polished chestnut's hues; the perfect artistry and symmetry of slender limbs, and glorious, arching necks, and noble heads, and velvet muzzles; the dazzling bits and chains and buckles; the glinting bridles, reins and saddles; Lord Tybar's exquisitely poised figure, so perfectly maintaining and carrying up the symmetry of his horse as to suggest the horse would be disfigured, truncated, were he to dismount; his taking swagger, his gay, fine face; and she——

And incantation: Jingle of bits mouthed in those velvet muzzles; a hoof pawed sharply on the road; swish of long, restless tails; creaking of saddlery; and sudden bursts of all the instruments in unison when heads were tossed and shaken. Remotely the whirr of a reaping machine. And somewhere birds——

Pretty!

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VI

GREETINGS had been exchanged; his apologies for his blundering descent upon them laughed at. Lord Tybar was saying "Well, it's a tiger of a place, this Garden Home of yours, Sabre——"

"It's not mine," said Sabre. "God forbid."

"Ah, you've not got the same beautiful local patriotism as I have. It's one of my most elegant qualities, my passionate devotion to my countryside. That was what that corker of a vicar of yours, Boom Bagshaw, told me I was when I wept with joy while he was showing me round. Yes, and now I'm a patron of the Garden Home Trust or a governor or a vice-priest or something. I am really. What is it I am, Nona?"

"You're a bloated aristocrat and a bloodsucker," Nona told him in her clear, fine voice. "And you're living on estates which your brutal ancestors ravaged from the people. That's what you are, Tony. I showed it to you in *The Searchlight* yesterday. And, I say, don't use 'elegant,' that's mine."

"Oh, by gad, yes, so I am," said Lord Tybar. "Bloodsucker! Good Lord, fancy being a bloodsucker!"

He looked so genuinely rueful and abashed that Sabre laughed; and then said to Nona: "Why is elegant 'yours,' Lady Tybar?"

She made a little pouting motion at him with her lips. "Marko, I wish to goodness you wouldn't call me Lady Tybar. Dash it, we've called one another Nona and Marko for about a thousand years, long before I ever knew Tony. And just because I'm married——"

"And to a mere loathsome bloodsucker, too," Lord Tybar interposed.

"Yes, especially to a bloodsucker. Just remember to say Nona, will you; otherwise, there'll be a cruel scene between us. I told you about it before I went away. You don't suppose Tony minds, do you?"

"And Sabre," said Lord Tybar, "what the devil does it matter what a bloated robber minds, anyway? That's the way to look at me, Sabre. Trample me underfoot, my boy. I'm a pestilent survivor of the feudal system, aren't I, Nona?"

"Absolutely. So Marko, don't be a completer noodle than you already are."

"Ah, you're getting it now." Lord Tybar murmured. "I'm a noodle, too, *The Searchlight* says."

He somehow gave Sabre the impression of taking even a deeper enjoyment in the incident between his wife and Sabre than the enjoyment he clearly had in his own facetiousness. He was slightly turned in his saddle so as to look directly at Nona, and he listened and interposed, and turned his eyes from her face to Sabre's, and from Sabre's back to hers, with his handsome head slightly cocked to one side and with much gleaming in his eyes: rather as if he had on some private mock.

Fantastical notion! What mock could he have?

"Well, about my word 'elegant.'" Nona was going on, "and why it is mine—weren't you asking?"

Sabre said he had. "Yes, why yours?"

"Why, you see, Derry and Toms is a case of it." She tickled her horse's ears with her riding switch, and he stamped a hoof on the ground and arched his neck as though he knew he was a case of it and was proud of being a case of it. "I wanted an elegant name for him and I always think two names are so elegant for a firm——"

"Bloodsucker and Noodle are mine," said Lord Tybar in a very gloomy voice; and they laughed.

"—So I called him Derry and Toms."

Sabre pointed out that this still left her own possession of the word unexplained.

"Oh, Marko, you're dreadfully matter-of-fact. You always were. Why, Tony and I get fond of a word and then we have it for our own, whichever of us it is, and use it for everything. And 'elegant's' mine just now. I'm dreadfully fond of it. It's so—well, elegant: there you are, you see!"

Lord Tybar announced that he had just become attached to a new word and desired to possess it. He was going to have Blood. "You see, if I live by sucking blood——"

"Tony, you're disgusting!"

"I know. I'm the most frightful things. I'm just beginning to realize it. Yes, Blood's mine, Nona. Copyright. All rights reserved. Blood."

"Well, so long as you stick to the noun and don't use the adjective," she said; and they all laughed again.

Lord Tybar gathered up his reins and stroked his left hand along them. "Well, kindness to animals!" he said. "That's another of my beautiful qualities. The perfect understanding between me and my horses tells me the mare has seen enough of you, Sabre. She tells me all her thoughts in her flanks and they Marconi up my nervous and receptive legs. I must write and tell the *Searchlight* that. Perhaps they'll think better of me." The mare, feeling his hand, began to dance coquettishly. "You'll come up and see us often, now you know we're back, won't you? Nona likes seeing you, don't you, Nona?" And again he looked from Nona to Sabre and back at Nona again with that look of mocking drollery.

"Oh, you're all right, Marko," Nona agreed, "when you're not too matter-of-fact. Yes, do come up. There's always a harsh word and a blow for you at Northrepps."

THE mare steadied again. She stretched out her neck toward Sabre and quivered her nostrils at him, sensing him. He put up a hand to stroke her beautiful muzzle and she threw up her head violently and swerved sharply around.

Not in the least discomposed, Lord Tybar, his body in perfect rhythm with her curvettings, laughed at Sabre over his shoulder. "She thinks you're up to something, Sabre. She thinks you've got designs on us. Marvelous how I know! Whisper and I shall hear, loved one. You'll hurt yourself in a minute."

The light in his smiling eyes was surely a mocking light. "Thinks you're up to something! Thinks you've got designs on us!" Extraordinary thing to say!

The mare was wheedled round again to her former position; against her will, but somehow as the natural result of her dancing. Marvelous how he directed her caprices into his own intentions and against her own. But Lord Tybar was now looking away behind him to where the adjoining meadow sloped far away and steeply to a copse. In the hollow only the tops of the trees could be seen. His eyes were screwed up in distant vision. He said, "Dash it, there's that old blighter Sooper. He's been avoiding me. Now I've got him. Nona, you won't mind getting back alone? I must speak to Sooper. I'm going to have his blood over that fodder business. Blood! My word! Good!"

He twisted the mare in a wonderfully quick and dexterous movement. "Good-by, Sabre. You don't mind, Nona?" And he flashed back a glance. He lifted the mare over the low bank with a superbly easy motion. He turned to wave his hand as she landed nimbly in the meadow, and he cantered away, image of grace, poetry of movement. Fortune's favorite!

The two left watched him. At the brow of the meadow he turned again in his saddle and waved again jauntily. They waved reply. He was over the brow. Out of sight.

VII

THE features of the level valley beyond the brow where only he could have seen the individual he sought, were, at that distance, of Noah's-Ark dimensions. "How he could have recognized any one!" said Nona, her gaze toward the valley. "I can't even see any one. He's got eyes like about four hawks!"

Sabre said, "And rides like a—what do they call those things?—like a centaur."

She turned her head toward him. "He does everything better than any one else," she said. "That's Tony's characteristic. Everything. He's perfectly wonderful."

These were enthusiastic words; but she spoke them without enthusiasm; she merely pronounced them. "Well, I'm off too," she said. "And what about you, Marko? You're going to work, aren't you? I don't think you ought to be able to stop and gossip like this. You're not getting an idler, are you? You used to be such a devoted hard-worker. My word!" and she laughed as though at some amused memory of his devotion to work.

He laughed too. They certainly had many recollections in common; though not all laughable. "I don't think I'm quite so—so earnest as I used to be," he smiled.

"Ah, but I like you earnest, Marko."

There was the tiniest silence between them. Yet it seemed to Sabre a very long silence.

She was again the one to speak, and her tone was rather abrupt and high-pitched as if she, too, were conscious of a long silence and broke it deliberately, as one breaks, with an effort, constraint.

"And how's Mabel?"

"She's all right. She's ever so keen on this Garden Home business."

"She would be," said Nona.

"And so am I!" said Sabre. Something in her tone made him say it defiantly.

She laughed. "I'm sure you are, Marko. Well, good-by;" and as Derry and Toms began to turn with his customary sedateness of motion she made the remark, "I'm so glad you don't wear trouser-clips, Marko. I do loathe trouser-clips."

He told her that he rode "one of those chainless bikes."

He said it rather mumblingly. Exactly in that tone she used to say things like "I do like you in that brown suit, Marko."

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VIII

HE RESUMED his ride. A mile farther on he overtook, on a slight rise, an immense tree-trunk slung between three pairs of wheels and dragged by two tremendous horses, harnessed tandemwise. As he passed them was the smell of warm horseflesh and his thought was "Pretty!"

He shot ahead and a line came into his mind:

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?"

Well he had had certain aspirations, dreams, visions. . . .

He was upon the crest whence the road ran down into Tidborough. Beneath him the spires of the cathedral lifted exquisitely above the surrounding city.

"Those houses in King's Close are going to be eighty pounds a year, and what do you think, Mrs. Toller is going to take one!"

Chapter Seven

The Tidborough Business

I

SABRE found but little business awaiting him when he got to his office. When he had disposed of it he sat some little time staring absentmindedly at the cases whereon were ranged the books of his publication. Then he took out the manuscript of "England" and turned over the pages. He wondered what Nona would think of it. He would like to tell her about it. He began to write.

Twyning came in.

Twyning rarely entered Sabre's room. Sabre did not enter Twyning's twice in a year. Their work ran on separate lines and there was something, unexpressed, the reverse of much sympathy between them. Twyning was an older man than Sabre. He was only two years older in computation by age but he was very much more in appearance, in manner and in business experience. He had been in the firm as a boy checker when Sabre was entering Tidborough School. He had attracted Mr. Fortune's special attention by disclosing a serious scamping of finish in a set of desks and he had risen to head-clerk when Sabre was at Oxford. On the day that Sabre entered the firm he had been put "on probation" in the position he now held, and on the day that Sabre's father retired he had been confirmed in the position. He regarded Sabre as an amateur and he was privately disturbed by the fact that a man who "did not know the ropes" and had not "been through the mill" should come to a position equal in standing to his own. Nevertheless he accepted the fact, showing not the smallest animosity. He was always very ready to be cordial toward Sabre; but his cordiality took a form in which Sabre had never seen eye to eye with him. The attitude he extended to Sabre was that he and Sabre were two young fellows under a rather pigheaded old employer and that they could have many jokes and grievances and go-ahead schemes in companionship together. Sabre did not accept this view. He gave Twyning, from the first, the impression of considering himself as working alongside Mr. Fortune instead of beneath him; and he was cold to, and refused to participate in, the truant school boy air which Twyning adopted when they were together. Twyning called this "sidey.' He was anxious to show Sabre, when Sabre first came to the firm, the best places to lunch in Tidborough, but Sabre was frequently lunching with one of the school housemasters or at the masters' common-room. Twyning thought this standoffish.

II

TWYNING was of middle height, very thin, black-haired. His clean-shaven face was deeply furrowed in rigid-looking furrows which looked as though shaving would be an intricate operation. He held himself very stiffly and spoke stiffly, as though the cords of his larynx were also rigidly inclined. When not speaking he had a habit of breathing rather noisily through his nose as if he were doing deep-breathing exercises. He was married and had a son who, Sabre had been surprised to hear, was already eighteen and doing well in a lawyer's office.

He came in and closed the door. He had a sheet of paper in his hand.

Sabre, engrossed, glanced up. "Hullo, Twyning." He wrote a word and then put down his pen. "Anything you want me about?" He lay back in his chair and stared, frowning, at the manuscript before him.

"Nothing particular, if you're busy," Twyning said. "I just looked in." He advanced the paper in his hand and looked at it as if about to add something else. But he said nothing and stood by Sabre's chair, also looking at the manuscript. "That that book?"

"M'm," Sabre was trying to retain his thoughts. He felt them slipping away before Twyning's presence. He could hear Twyning breathing through his nose and felt incensed that Twyning should come and breathe through his nose by his chair when he wanted to write.

But Twyning continued to stand by the chair and to breathe through his nose. He was reading over Sabre's shoulder.

The few pages of "England" already written lay in front of Sabre's pad, the first page uppermost. Twyning read, and interjected a snort into his nasal rhythm.

"Well, that book's not written for me, anyway," he remarked.

Sabre agreed shortly. "It isn't. But why not?"

Twyning read aloud the first words. "'This England you live in is yours.' Well, I take my oath it isn't mine. Not a bloody inch of it. D'you know what's happening to me? I'm being turned out of my house. The lease is out and the whole damned house and everything I've put on to it goes to one of these lordlings—this Lord Tybar—just because one of his ancestors, who'd never even dreamt of the house, pinched the land it stands on from the public common and started to pocket ground-rent. Now I'm being pitched into the street to let Lord Tybar have a house that's no more his than the man's in the moon. D'you call that right?"

"No, I don't," said Sabre, but with a tinge of impatience. "I call it rotten."

Twyning seemed surprised. "Do you, though? Well, how about that book? I mean to say——"

"I shall say so in the book. Or as good as say so."

Twyning pondered. "Shall you, by Jove? Well, but I say, that's liberalism, radicalism, you know. That's not the sort of pap for kids."

"Well, the book isn't going to be pap for kids."

Twyning snorted a note of laughter through his nose. "Sorry, old man. Don't get shirty. But I say, though, seriously, we can't put out that sort of stuff, you know. Radicalism. Not with our connection. I mean to say——"

Sabre gathered up the papers and dropped them into a drawer. "Look here, Twyning, suppose you wait till the book's written before you criticize it. How about that for an idea?"

"All right, all right, old man. I'm not criticizing. What's it going to be called?"

"England."

Silence.

Sabre, appreciating with the author's intense suspicion for his child, something in the silence, looked up at Twyning. "Anything wrong about that? 'England.' You read the first sentence?"

Twyning said slowly, "Yes, I know I did. I thought of it then."

"Thought of *what?*"

"Well — 'England' — 'this England.' I mean to say— What about Scotland?"

"Well, what about Scotland?"

Twyning seemed really concerned. The puckers on his face had visibly deepened. He used a stubborn tone. "Well, you know what people are. You know how damned touchy those Scotchmen are. I mean to say, if we put out a book like that, the Scotch——"

Sabre smote the desk. This kind of thing from Twyning made him furious, and he particularly was not in the mood for it this morning. He struck his hand down on the desk: "Well, damn the Scotch! What the devil's it got to do with the Scotch? This book isn't about Scotland. It's about England. *England.* I'll tell you another thing. You say if 'we' put out a book like that. It isn't 'we.' Excuse me saying so, but it certainly isn't you. It's me." He stopped, and then laughed. "Sorry, Twyning."

III

TWYNING'S face had gone very dark. His jaw had set. "Oh, all right." He turned away, but immediately returned again, his face relaxed. "That's all right. Only my chipping, you know. I say though," and he laughed nervously. "That 'not we.' You've said it! I'd come in to tell you. It's going to be 'we.'" He advanced the paper he had brought in in his hand, his thumb indicating the top left-hand corner. "What do you think of me above the line, my boy?"

The paper was a sheet of the firm's notepaper. In the upper left-hand corner was printed in small type "The Rev. Sebastian Fortune." Beneath the name was a short black line and beneath the line: "Mr. Shearman Twyning. Mr. Mark Sabre:

The Rev. Sebastian Fortune

Mr. Shearman Twyning.
Mr. Mark Sabre

Sabre said slowly, "What do you mean—you 'above the line'?"

Twyning indicated the short line with a forefinger. "That line, my boy. Jonah's

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going to take me into partnership. Just told me."

He had released the paper into Sabre's hand. Sabre handed it back with a single word: "Good."

Twyning's face darkened again and darkened worse. He crumpled the paper violently in his hand and spoke also but a single word: "Thanks!" He turned sharply on his heel and went to the door.

"I say, Twyning!" Sabre jumped to his feet and went to Twyning with outstretched hand. "I didn't mean to take it like that. Don't think I'm not—I congratulate you. Jolly good. Splendid. I tell you what—I don't mind telling you—It was a bit of a smack in the eye for me a moment. You know, I've rather sweated over this business"—his glance indicated the stacked bookshelves, the firm's publications, *his* publications—"See what I mean?"

A certain movement in his throat and about his mouth indicated, more than his words, what he meant. A slight.

Twyning took the hand and gripped it with a firmness characteristic of his handshake.

"Thanks, old man. Thanks awfully. Of course I know what you mean. But after all. Look at the thing, eh? I mean to say, you've been here—what—nine or ten years. Well, I've been over twenty-five. Natural, eh? And you're doing splendidly. Every one knows that. It's only a question of time. Thanks awfully." He reached for Sabre's hand again and again gripped it hard.

Sabre went back and sat against his desk. "What rather got me, you know, coming all of a sudden like that, was that Fortune promised me partnership, twice, quite a bit ago."

Twyning, who had been speaking with an emotion in consonance with the grip of his hand, said a little blankly: "Did he? That so?"

"Yes, twice. And this looked like, when you told me—well, like dissatisfaction since, see? Eh?"

Twyning did not take up the point. "I say, you never told me."

"I'm telling you now," Sabre said. And he laughed ruefully. "It comes to much the same thing—as it turns out."

"Yes, but still— I wish we worked in a bit more together, Sabre. I'm always ready to, you know. Let's, shall we?"

SABRE made no reply. Twyning repeated "Let's" and nodded and left the room. Immediately he opened the door again and reappeared. "I say, you won't say anything to Jonah, of course?"

Sabre smiled grimly. "I'm going to."

Again the darkening. "Dash it, that's not quite playing the game, is it?"

"Rot, Twyning. Fortune's made me a promise and I'm going to ask if he's had any reason for withdrawing it, that's all. It's nothing to do with your show."

"You're bound to tell him I've told you."

"Well, man alive, I'm bound to know, aren't I?"

"Yes—in a way. Oh, well, all right. Remember about working in more together." He withdrew and closed the door.

Outside the door he clenched his hands. He thought, "Smack in the eye for you, was it. You'll get a damn sight worse smack in the eye one of these days. Dirty dog!"

IV

IMMEDIATELY Twyning had left, Sabre went in to Mr. Fortune. His room—like that of Twyning's at the far end of the passage—communicated with Mr. Fortune's, and Sabre stepped in abruptly without waiting for response to his knock.

The Rev. Sebastian Fortune was called Jonah by his employees; and he was called Jonah partly because his visits to the places of their industry invariably presaged disaster, but principally for the gross-minded and wrongly-adduced reason that he had (in their opinion) a whale's belly.

He bore a certain resemblance to a stunted whale. He was chiefly abdominal. His legs appeared to begin, without thighs, at his knees, and his face, without neck, at his chest. His face was large, both wide and long, and covered as to its lower part with a tough scrub of gray beard. The line of his mouth showed through the scrub and turned extravagantly downward at the corners. He had a commanding, heavily knobbed brow, and small gray eyes of intense severity. His voice was cold, and his manner, though intensely polished and suave, singularly stern and decisive. He had an expression "I have decided" and Sabre said that he kept this expression on ice. It had an icy sound and it certainly had the rigidity and imperviousness of an iceberg. Hearing it, one might believe that it could have a cruel sound.

The Rev. Sebastian Fortune had come into the business at the age of twenty-eight. He was now sixty-two. He had come in to find the controlling interest almost entirely in the hands of the Fortune branch of the firm, and in his thirty-four years of association, indeed in the first twenty, he had, by fortuitous circumstances, and by force of his decisive personality, achieved what amounted to sole and single control.

And it was an admirable, a valuable and a celebrated business that he controlled. Its occupation was with the church and for the church, with colleges, universities and schools, and for colleges, universities and schools, with bishops, priests and clergy, churchwardens, headmasters, headmistresses, governors and bursars and for bishops, priests and clergy, churchwardens, headmasters, headmistresses, governors and bursars.

Its address was The Precincts. Fortune, East & Sabre, The Precincts, Tidborough.

Was any one so utterly removed from affairs as not to know them as ecclesiastical furnishers? "They're at Tidborough. They *do* Tidborough" (meaning the world-famous cathedral). Or as scholastic providers? "They're at Tidborough. They *do* Tidborough" (meaning the empire-famous school).

It was said that if you loitered long enough in Fortune, East & Sabre's you would meet every dignitary of the church and of education in the United Kingdom; and it was added that you would not have to wait long.

Fortune, East & Sabre, The Precincts, Tidborough.

V

THE publishing of educational text-books "for the use of schools" had been—as has been said—no part of the firm's business until Sabre came into it. The idea had been his own, and Mr. Fortune, because the idea was not *his* own, had very half-heartedly assented to it and very disencouragingly looked upon it in the fiddlingly small way in which he permitted it to be begun.

From the outset it had been a very considerable success. Sabre was interested in books and interested in education. He had many friends among the large staff of Tidborough schoolmasters and had developed many acquaintances among the large body of members of the teaching profession with whom the firm was in touch. He was fond of discussing methods and difficulties of encouraging stubborn youth in the arid paths of assimilating knowledge, and he had a peculiarly fresh and sympathetic recollection of his own boyish flounderings in those paths. To these tastes and qualities, and perhaps because of them, he found he was able to bring what was incontestably a flair for discovering the sort of book that needed to be compiled and, what was equally important, the sort of man to compile it. Also, in his capacity of general editor of the volumes, to give much stimulating suggestion and advice to the authors.

He had never been so pleased as on the day when the *Spectator*, in an extended notice of four new text-books, had written: "It is always a pleasure to open one of the school text-books bearing the imprint of Fortune, East & Sabre, and issued in the pleasing format which this firm have made their own. Their publications give the impression of a directing mind inspired with the happy thought of presenting text-books, not for the master, but for the pupil, and of carrying out this design with singular freshness and originality."

On the day when that notice appeared, Mr. Fortune, who considered that his mind was, or would be supposed to be, the directing mind referred to, had repeated a promise of partnership: first made when the enterprise began to show unexpected signs of responding to Sabre's enthusiasm. "Very good, Sabre, very good indeed. I am bound to say, capital. I may tell you, as your father probably told you, that it was always understood between him and me that you should be taken into partnership if you showed signs of promise. Unquestionably you do. When you have brought the publishing into line with our established departments we will go into the matter and—" he made one of his nearest approaches to pleasantry—"take steps to restore the house of Sabre in some part to its ancient glories in the firm—in some part."

And when Sabre expressed his gratification: "Enough, I have decided."

VI

AS SABRE, straight from Twyning's disturbing news, now came into him, Mr. Fortune, presenting a whale-like flank, was at his table going through invoices and making notes in a small black book which he carried always in a tail pocket of his jacket.

"Can I speak to you a minute, Mr. Fortune? Are you busy?"

Mr. Fortune entered a note in the small black book: "Twenty-eight, sixteen, four." He placed a broad elastic band round the book and with the dexterity of practise passed the book around his bulk and into

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the tail pocket. He flicked his hands away and extended them for an instant, palms upward, much as a conjuror might to show there was nothing in them. "Certainly you may speak to me, Sabre. As a matter of fact, I rather wanted to speak to you." He pointed across the whale-like front to the massive leathern armchair beside his desk.

The seat of the armchair marked in a vast hollow the cumulative ponderosity of the pillars of church and school who were wont to sit in it. Sabre seated himself on the arm. "Ah, was it about this partnership business?"

Mr. Fortune had already frowned to see Sabre upon the arm of the chair, a position for which the arm was not intended. His frown deepened. "What partnership business? It certainly was not about any partnership business."

"Well, you recollect promising me—being good enough to promise me—*twice*—that I was going to come into partnership——"

Mr. Fortune folded his hands upon his whale-like front. "I certainly do not recollect that, Sabre." He raised a hand responsive to a gesture. "Allow me. I recollect no *promise*. Either twice or any other number of times, greater or fewer. I *do* recollect mentioning to you the *possibility* of my making you such a proposal in my good time. In my good time. Is that what you refer to as 'this partnership business'?"

"Yes—partly. Well, look here, sir, it's *been* a pretty good time, hasn't it? I mean since you spoke of it."

Mr. Fortune tugged strongly at his watch by its gold chain and looked at the watch rather as though he expected to see the extent of the good time there recorded. He forced it back with both hands rather as though it had failed of this duty and was being crammed away in disgrace. "I am expecting Canon Toomuch." He hit the watch, cowering (as one might suppose) in his pocket. "You know, my dear Sabre, I do think this is a little odd. A little unusual. You can not *bounce* into a partnership, Sabre. I know your manner. I know your manner well. Oblige me by not fiddling with that paper-knife. Thank you. And I make allowances for your manner. But, believe me, a partnership is not to be *bounced* into. You give me the impression—I do not say you mean it, I say you *give* it—of suddenly and without due cause or just im—just opportunity, trying to *bounce* me into taking you into partnership. I most emphatically am not to be *bounced*, Sabre. I never have been *bounced* and you may quite safely take it from me that I never propose or intend to be *bounced*."

Sabre thought, "Well, it would take a steam crane to bounce you, anyway." He said, "I hadn't the faintest intention of doing any such thing. If I made you think so, I'm sorry. I simply wanted to ask if you have changed your mind, and if so, why. I mean, whether I have given you any cause for dissatisfaction since you prom—since you first mentioned it to me."

Mr. Fortune's whale-like front had labored with some agitation during his repudiation of liability to being bounced. It now resumed its normal dignity. "You certainly have not, Sabre. No cause for dissatisfaction. On the contrary. You know quite well that there are certain characteristics of yours of which, constituted as I am, I do not approve. I really must beg of you not to fiddle with those scissors. Thank you. But they are, happily, quite apart from your work. I do not permit them to influence my opinion of you by one jot or tittle. You may entirely reassure yourself. May I inquire why you should have supposed I had changed my mind?"

"Because I've just heard that you've told Twyning you're going to take ***him*** into partnership."

The whale-like front gave a sudden leap and quiver precisely as if it had been struck by a cricket ball. Mr. Fortune's voice hardened very remarkably. "As to that, I will permit myself two remarks. In the first place, I consider it highly reprehensible of Twyning to have communicated this to you ——"

Twyning came in and closed the door. He had a sheet of paper in his hand.

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Low Jinks, her matchless training at the level of performing duties pat to the moment and without command, appeared with a tray.

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Sabre broke in. "Well, he didn't. I'd like you to be quite clear on that point, if you don't mind. Twyning didn't tell me. It came out quite indirectly in the course of something I was saying to him. I doubt if he knows that I know, even. I inferred it. It seems I inferred correctly."

There flashed through Mr. Fortune's mind a poignant regret that, this being the case, he had not denied it. He said: "I am exceedingly glad to hear it. I might have known Twyning would not be capable of such a breach of discretion. Resuming what I had to say—and, Sabre, I shall indeed be most intensely obliged if you will refrain from fiddling with the things on my table—resuming what I had to say, I will observe in the second and last place that I entirely deprecate, I will go further, I most strongly resent, any questioning by any one member of my staff based on any intentions of mine relative to another member of my staff. This business is my business. I think you are sometimes a little prone to forget that. If it seems good to me to strengthen your hand in your department, that has nothing whatever to do with Twyning. And if it seems good to me to strengthen Twyning's hand in Twyning's department, that has nothing whatever to do with you."

Sabre, despite his private feelings in the matter, characteristically followed this reasoning completely, and said so. "Yes, that's your way of looking at it, sir, and I don't say it isn't perfectly sound—from your point of view——"

Mr. Fortune inclined his head: "I am obliged to you."

"—Only other people look at things on the face of them, just as they appear. You know—it's difficult to express it—I've put my heart into those books." He made a gesture toward his room. "I can't quite explain it, but I felt that the slight, or what looks like a slight, is on them, not on me." He put his hand to the back of his head, a habit characteristic when he was embarrassed or perplexed. "I'm afraid I can't quite express it, but it's the books. Not myself. I'm—fond of them. They're not just paper and print to me. I feel that they feel it. You won't quite understand, I'm afraid——"

"No, I confess that is a little beyond me," said Mr. Fortune, smoothing his front; and they remained looking at one another.

A SUDDEN and unearthly moan sounded through the room. Mr. Fortune spun himself with relief to his desk and applied his lips to a flexible speaking-tube. "Yes?" He dodged the tube to his ear, then to his lips again. "Beg Canon Toomuch to step up to my room." He laid down the tube.

Sabre roused himself and stood up abrupty. "Ah, well, all right, sir." He moved toward his door.

"Sabre," inquired Mr. Fortune, "you get on well with Twyning, I trust?"

"Get on? Oh, yes. We don't have much to do with each other."

"Do you dislike Twyning?"

"I don't dislike him. I'm indifferent to him."

"I regret to hear that," said Mr. Fortune.

From the door Sabre put a question in his turn: "When are you going to make this change with Twyning?"

"Not to-day."

"Am I still to remember that you held out partnership to me?"

"Certainly you may."

"When is it likely to be?"

"Not to-day."

Maddening expression!

Sabre, in his room, went toward his chair. He was about to drop into it when he recollected something. He went out into the corridor and along the corridor, past Mr. Fortune's door (Canon Toomuch coming heavily up the stairs) to Twyning's room. He put in his head: "Oh, I say, Twyning, if Fortune should ever ask you if you told me about that business you can tell him you didn't."

"Oh—oh, right-o," said Twyning; and to himself when the door closed, "Funked speaking to him!"

VII

ARRIVED again in his room, Sabre dropped into his chair. In his eyes was the look that had been in them when he had tried to explain to Mr. Fortune about the books what Mr. Fortune had confessed he found a little beyond him. He thought: "The books— Of course Fortune hasn't imagined them—seen them grow—helped them to grow—But it hurts. Like hell it hurts. And I can't explain to him how I feel about them. I can't explain to any one."

His thoughts moved on: "I've been twelve years with him. Twelve years we've been daily together, and when I said that about the books I sat there and he sat there—and just looked. Stared at each other like masks. Masks! Nothing but a mask to be seen for either of us. I sit behind my mask and he sits behind his and that's all we see. Twelve mortal years! And they're thousands of people in thousands of offices—thousands of homes—just the same. All behind masks. Mysterious business. Extraordinary. How do we keep behind? Why do we keep behind? We're all going through the same life. Come the same way. Go the same way. You look at insects, ants, scurrying about, and not two of them seem to have a thing in common, not two of them seem to know one another; and you think it's odd, you think it's because they don't know they're all in the same boat. But we're just the same. They might think it of us. And we *do* know. And yet you get two lives and put them together twelve years in an office—in a house—Mabel and I—practically we just sit and look at each other. Her mask. My mask——"

He thought: "One knows what it is, what it looks like, with ants. They're all plugging about like mad like that, not knowing one another, nor caring, because they all seem to be looking for something. I wonder——"

He thought: "I wonder—are we? Is that the trouble? All looking for something— You can see it in half the faces you see. Some wanting, and knowing they are wanting, something; others wanting something but just putting up with it, just content to be discontented. You can see it. Yes, you can. Looking for what? Love? But lots have love. Happiness? But aren't lots happy? But are they?"

He thought: "It goes deeper than that. It's some universal thing that's wanting. I think it's something that religion ought to give, but doesn't. Light? Some new light to give every one certainty in religion, in belief. Light?"

He thought of Mabel. "Those houses in King's Close are going to be eighty pounds a year, and what do you think, Mrs. Toller is going to take one." And he had not answered her but had rustled the newspaper and had intended her to know why he had rustled the paper: to show he couldn't stick it! Unkind. His heart smote him for Mabel. Such a pathetically simple thing for Mabel to find enjoyment in! Why, he might just as reasonably rustle the newspaper at a baby because it had enjoyment in a rattle. A rattle would not amuse him, and Mrs. Toller taking a house beyond her means did not amuse him; but why on earth should he——?

He put the thing to himself in his reasoning way, his brow wrinkled up: She was his wife. She had left her home for his home. She had a right to his interest in her ideas. He had a duty toward her ideas. Unkind. Rotten.

Upon a sudden impulse he looked at his watch. Only just after twelve. He could get back in time for lunch. Lonely for her, day after day, and left as he had left her that morning. They could have a jolly afternoon together. He could make it a jolly afternoon. Nona kept coming into his thoughts—and more so after this Twyning business. He would have Mabel in his thoughts.

He went in and told Mr. Fortune he rather thought of taking the afternoon off if he was not wanted. He mounted his bicycle and rode purposefully back to Mabel.

Chapter Eight

A Memorable Holiday

I

THE free-wheel run down into Penny Green landed him a little short of his gate—not bad! Pirrip, the postman, whom he had passed in the bicycle's penultimate struggles, overtook him in its death throes and watched with interest the miracles of balancing with which, despite his preoccupation of mind, habit made him prolong the finish to the uttermost inch.

He dismounted. "Anything for me, Pirrip?"

"One for you, Mr. Sabre."

Sabre took the letter and glanced at the handwriting.

It was from Nona.

Her small, neat, masculine script had once been as familiar to him as his own. It was curiously like his own. She had the same trick of not linking all the letters in a word. Her longer words, like his own, looked as if they were two or three short words close together. To this day, when he did not get a letter from her once in a year—or in five years—his address on an envelope in her handwriting was a thing he could bring, and sometimes did bring, with perfect clearness before his mental vision.

He glanced at it, regarded it for slightly longer than a glance and with a little pucker of brows and lips, then made the action of putting it, unopened, in his pocket. Then he rested the bicycle against his hip and opened her letter.

(Continued on page 86)

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The dinner scene in Gilda Varesi's comedy, "Enter Madame," of which she is author and star.

The Shadow on a Great Success

By Alexander Woollcott

WHEN "Enter Madame" slipped quietly into New York last summer and established itself overnight as one of the triumphant plays of a none-too-happy season, and Gilda Varesi, who wrote it and plays in it, awoke next morning to find herself rather more famous than she had dared to dream, there were few among all those rejoicing with her who saw the shadow which fell across this shining success. It was the shadow that is known as "Too late." The success itself was incontestable, but it could not be shared by the Madame Varesi about whom and, in a sense, for whom the play was written.

"ENTER Madame" is a comedy of temperament, a humorous, affectionate study of the tantrums and tenderness of a famous prima donna, such a baffling and enchanting first lady of the opera as Elena Varesi, whose sweet voice and overwhelming charm made her so great a favorite in Rome and Berlin and London in the eighties. Of such stock comes this daughter of hers, this Gilda Varesi. Her most vivid memories of her mother are of a radiant lady who, when her engagements permitted and she happened to think of it, used occasionally to sweep down on startled Milan where her two daughters were left in the care of a formidable nurse. There would be a shower of gifts and endearments and enough maternal solicitude to last all year crowded tempestuously into a few exciting days. Then the great lady would go coursing on her way, perhaps to take the baths at Aix-les-bains, perhaps to descend on London for a dazzling engagement at Covent Garden.

It is with just such a whirlwind domestic interlude that the new comedy deals. The play deals with madame's brief visit home, a lull between engagements in Spain and South America which she devotes to routing from her lonesome husband's mind all thought of taking a duller but more comfortable wife to his bosom. He had sworn he was done forever with this traipsing around the world in her train, but the last you see of him he is starting dutifully for Buenos Aires and carrying her dog to boot. The last line of the play, delivered with a flourish, is "Exit Madame."

That Gilda Varesi did not grow up to grace some provincial stock company in her native Italy is due to the fact that Madame Varesi lost her voice in a severe illness and, with the idea of burying herself as far as possible from the tormenting scenes of her former glory, migrated to a place of which she had heard vaguely and which seemed to have a sort of Italian name. This was Chicago.

There she managed to get along somehow by teaching singing and, if there was not always enough to provide the children with fit clothes for school, there was certainly enough for an occasional reception and salon when such peers as Melba passed by and revived Madame Varesi's memories.

Gilda, the ugly duckling of the family, was a considerable trial to her mother because she insisted on going on the stage. Madame Varesi knew what heartaches it could involve, and besides it is just possible that she doubted inwardly whether the aspirant could make such a mark in the theatre as would be expected—by her—of a Varesi.

This fear was only confirmed at the meeting she finally consented to arrange between her daughter and the great Modjeska, who in her declining years (she must have been nearly seventy then) was still touring successfully and inexpensively in classical repertoire. For this meeting the youngest of the Varesis had prepared herself by learning the speeches of *Desdemona* and shouting them out in the woods to the considerable agitation of the local fauna.

THE meeting was tense, the famous star listening majestically while the neophyte poured out a cataract of Venetian woe. The decision, when finally given, was impromptu, but fraught with significance.

"Gilda will be an emotional actress," she said. (At this point Madame Varesi dissolved in tears because emotional actresses suffer so.) "But," she went on bitterly, "she will not be a success. She is thin, homely and an artist. On all three counts, they will not want her in the American theatre."

Then followed the promise of a place in Modjeska's company, after a brief practise engagement with the Ben Greet players, with whom she played everything from *Jessica* in "The Merchant" and *Maria* in "Twelfth Night" to the mob in "Julius Cæsar," playing the mob with such Transalpine ardor that *Marc Antony* made a formal complaint against the mob's sitting on poor *Cæsar's* corpse.

Meanwhile, Madame Varesi herself tried to instil a few principles. There is something deeply pathetic in the picture of the exiled prima donna, now old and stout, enlivening those Chicago lodgings with an effort to reproduce for her wide-eyed

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daughter the gesture and passion of some forgotten triumph in far-off Covent Garden.

The first season with Modjeska—it was Modjeska's last season on the stage—was eventful. Once the star fell and broke her arm and the management made a thrifty effort to keep the tour going with the novice in the rôle of *Lady Macbeth*. The novice did so well that Modjeska promptly installed her as *Elizabeth* in "Mary Stuart"—the German Schiller's tragedy given with an Italian and Polish actress, each playing in English with an accent that could be heard for miles. Yet it must have been worth seeing, at that.

It was fresh from such experiences that Gilda Varesi went to Mrs. Fiske for "Salvation Nell" and, in two seasons, learned more from her than most players learn anywhere.

THERE followed many minor rôles and ever and always the dailies and weeklies of England and America gave a word or so of critical enthusiasm for Varesi—for her fine work both here and abroad as the old opera singer in "Romance," for her astonishing performance as the madwoman in "Children of Earth," for her unforgettable rage as the blind creature in the dungeon scene of "The Jest." Oh, there were plenty of plaudits. But always her rôles were minor rôles. Secretly, Madame Varesi out in Chicago must have felt that the mere plaudits were not enough for one whose great-grandmother had been the adored Luigia Boccabadotti at the opera in Rome when Napoleon was lord of Europe, whose grandfather had been the Felice Varesi for whom "Rigoletto" was written, and whose mother had had more than a little hour of triumph in the great capitals back home.

Then, into the producing field in New York came a new manager, Brock Pemberton, who decided to make his début with this comedy, "Enter Madame," which, in desperation, Varesi had written for herself in collaboration with Mrs. Donn Byrne. The play had been kicking around the managers' offices for many months without any of them reaching the point of willingness to produce it.

Attendant upon its first performance were all the circumstances which the wiseacres of Broadway regard as certain forerunners of failure. Here was a new and inexperienced producer. They always fail, said Broadway. Then he had been obliged to content himself with the Garrick, a theatre so far outside the familiar belt that the wiseacres said no one would go near it. The play opened without the advantage of an out-of-town try-out on a night so torrid that existence in New York was no more than barely endurable. At eight o'clock, just at the hour calculated to discourage all theatre-goers, the Heavens opened and sluiced the city. The leading man had entered the rehearsals so late that his knowledge of the text was maddeningly vague and he had to be prompted throughout an agonizing evening.

Yet "Enter Madame" succeeded. Never, from the first night, has its theatre known a vacant seat. Within a few weeks many more central playhouses were ogling it and offering blandishments. Ticket agencies were agreeing to buy all its orchestra seats for six weeks in advance. London theatres were cabling invitations to visit Piccadilly and the Strand. It was an immense success.

Madame Gilda Varesi.

And the shadow? Well, "Enter Madame" was produced in mid-August of the year just past. Madame Varesi had died in June.

THE casual mention of how Varesi came to play *Lady Macbeth* before she was twenty-one is a reminder that whereas no managers ever cast her for important rôles, chance did occasionally. Or was it chance?

Usually the lot of an understudy in the American theatre is a cheerless one. There is a strong tradition which forces the sickest actor on to the stage when the voice of the call-boy is heard. It is only in fiction that an understudy steps into a rôle at the last minute and awakes next morning to find himself in capital letters.

Yet, somehow, Varesi has done pretty well. The giving of any other player's rôle to her to study in case of an emergency has had a singularly debilitating effect on the actress thus doomed to be deplaced. Not Modjeska alone but all the others have given way under the strain. Thus Doris Keane in London, when "Romance" was enjoying its interminable war-time run there, lived to experience the sensation of reading in her own sick-bed the glowing English criticisms of her understudy's performance in the leading rôle of that Sheldon triumph.

Only Mrs. Fiske resisted to the last, but when, in "Salvation Nell," she had to go through her part with this flaming Italian woman standing in the wings, all made up to go on as *Nell* if need be, and fairly radiating the will to play, even she tottered. She felt within her a stronger impulse to go on sick-report than she had known in all her days on the stage. Hastily she arranged for Varesi to understudy another part. "May it be that of the harlot?" asked the aspirant wistfully. Mrs. Fiske smiled maternally. "With your figure, my dear?" she replied, and bade the young hopeful make ready to substitute in case anything should befall the gaunt woman playing *Hallelujah Mary*. A few days later *Hallelujah Mary* broke an obliging rib. Small wonder then that, in so superstitious a world as the theatre, word soon spread that Varesi had brought over from Italy the power of the evil eye—a rumor which gained considerable credence once upon a time when, in the middle of a sensationally successful run, a great star announced the intention of departing for other climes on a matter of private business. The management immediately put Varesi into rehearsal as a substitute. She was in the midst of elated preparation for the rôle, which, after the succession of old peasant parts, would suffer her to speak at last without an accent and to reveal what beauty of body was hers. In the midst of all this, the star suddenly decided not to quit. They say Varesi went calmly to the great one's dressing-room, looked the offender over from head to toe and said in a voice of doom (no matter how much she may have been smiling inwardly): "I was promised this part, and if I do not get the chance to play it I will poison you."

Whereat there were gales of laughter up and down Broadway—laughter suddenly and nervously stilled when, a fortnight later, the star was borne away for a week of serious illness. The doctors seemed to think it was influenza. Maybe it was.

However, that was in the days of struggle. Why, they're even naming hats after Varesi this winter.

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The Heart of Little Shikara

By Edison Marshall

In 1920 the Society of Arts and Sciences collected a volume of the year's best short stories in honor of O. Henry; and among the fifteen stories published was Edison Marshall's "The Elephant Remembers," which had appeared in EVERYBODY'S. Here is another story of the same type by the same author—a story of India, this time about a tiger instead of an elephant, and with a most appealing small brown boy for hero. A big story, tense and true and absorbing.

IF IT hadn't been for a purple moon that came peering up above the dark jungle just at nightfall, it would have been impossible to tell that Little Shikara was at his watch. He was really just the color of the shadows—a rather pleasant brown—he was very little indeed, and besides, he was standing very, very still. If he was trembling at all, from anticipation and excitement, it was no more than Nahar the tiger trembles as he crouches in ambush. But the moon did show him—peering down through the leaf-clusters of the heavy vines—and shone very softly in his wide-open dark eyes.

And it was a purple moon—no other color that man could name. It looked almost unreal, like a paper moon painted very badly by a clumsy stage-hand. The jungle-moon quite often has that peculiar purplish tint, most travelers know, but few of them indeed ever try to tell what causes it. This particular moon probed down here and there between the tall bamboos, transformed the jungle—just now waking—into a mystery and a fairyland, glinted on a hard-packed elephant trail that wound away into the thickets, and always came back to shine on the coal-black Oriental eyes of the little boy beside the village gate. It showed him standing very straight and just as tall as his small stature would permit, and looked oddly silvery and strange on his long, dark hair. Little Shikara, son of Khoda Dunnoo, was waiting for the return of a certain idol and demigod who was even now riding home in his *howdah* from the tiger hunt.

Others of the villagers would be down to meet Warwick Sahib as soon as they heard the shouts of his beaters—but Little Shikara had been waiting almost an hour. Likely if they had known about it, they would have commented on his badness, because he was notoriously bad, if indeed—as the villagers told each other—he was not actually cursed with evil spirits.

IN the first place, he was almost valueless as a herder of buffalo. Three times, when he had been sent with the other boys to watch the herds in their wallows, he had left his post and crept away into the fringe of jungle on what was unquestionably some mission of witchcraft. For small naked brown boys, as a rule, do not go alone and unarmed into the thick bamboos. Too many things can happen to prevent them ever coming out again; too many brown silent ribbons crawl in the grass, or too many yellow, striped creatures, no less lithe, lurk in the thickets. But the strangest thing of all—and the surest sign of witchcraft—was that he had always come safely out again, yet with never any satisfactory explanations as to why he had gone. He had always looked some way very joyful and tremulous—and perhaps even pale if from the nature of things a brown boy ever can look pale. But it was the kind of paleness that one has after a particularly exquisite experience. It was not the dumb, teeth-chattering paleness of fear.

"I saw the sergeant of the jungle," Little Shikara said after one of these excursions. And this made no sense at all.

"THERE are none of the king's soldiers here," the brown village folk replied to him. "Either thou liest to us, or thine eyes lied to thee. And didst thou also see the chevron that told his rank?"

"That was the way I knew him. It was the black bear, and he wore the pale chevron low on his throat."

This was Little Shikara all over. Of course he referred to the black Himalayan bear which all men know wears a yellowish patch, of chevron shape, just in front of his fore legs; but why he should call him a jungle-sergeant was quite beyond the wit of the village folk to say. Their imagination did not run in that direction. It never even occurred to them that Little Shikara might be a born jungle creature, expatriated by the accident of birth—one of that free, strange breed that can never find peace in the villages of men.

"But remember the name we gave him," his mother would say. "Perhaps he is only living up to his name."

For there are certain native hunters in India that are known, far and wide, as the Shikaris; and possibly she meant in her tolerance that her little son was merely a born huntsman. But in reality Little Shikara was not named for these men at all. Rather it was for a certain fleet-winged little hawk, a hunter of sparrows, that is one of the most free spirits in all the jungle.

And it was almost like taking part in some great hunt himself—to be waiting at the gate for the return of Warwick Sahib. Even now, the elephant came striding out of the shadows; and Little Shikara could see the trophy. The hunt had indeed been successful, and the boy's glowing eyes beheld—even in the shadows—the largest, most beautiful tiger-skin he had ever seen. It was the great Nahar, the royal tiger, who had killed one hundred cattle from near-by fields.

Warwick Sahib rode in his *howdah;* and he did not seem to see the village people that came out to meet him. In truth, he seemed half-asleep, his muscles limp, his gray eyes full of thoughts. He made no answer to the triumphant shouts of the village-folk. Little Shikara glanced once at the lean, bronzed face, the limp, white, thin hands, and something like a shiver of ecstasy went clear to his ten toes. For like many other small boys, all over the broad world, he was a hero-worshiper to the last hair of his head; and this quiet man on the elephant was to him beyond all measure the most wonderful living creature on the earth.

He didn't cry out, as the others did. He simply stood in mute worship, his little body tingling with glory. Warwick Sahib had looked up now, and his slow eyes were sweeping the line of brown faces. But still he did not seem to see them. And then—wonder of wonders—his eyes rested full on the eyes of his little worshiper beside the gate.

But it was quite the way of Warwick Sahib to sweep his gray, tired-out eyes over a scene and seemingly perceive nothing; yet in reality absorbing every detail with the accuracy of a photographic plate. And his seeming indifference was not a pose with him, either. He was just a great sportsman who was also an English gentleman, and he had learned certain lessons of impassiveness from the wild. Only one of the brown faces he beheld was worth a lingering glance. And when he met that one his eyes halted in their sweeping survey—and Warwick Sahib smiled.

THAT face was the brown, eager visage of Little Shikara. And the blood of the boy flowed to the skin, and he glowed red all over through the brown.

It was only the faintest of quiet, tolerant smiles; but it meant more to him than almost any kind of an honor could have meant to the prematurely gray man in the *howdah*. The latter passed on to his estate, and some of the villagers went back to their women and their thatch huts. But still little Shikara stood motionless—and it wasn't until the thought suddenly came to him that possibly the beaters had already gathered and were telling the story of the kill that with startling suddenness he raced back through the gates to the village.

Yes, the beaters had assembled in a circle under a tree, and most of the villagers had gathered to hear the story. He slipped in among them, and listened with both outstanding little ears. Warwick Sahib had dismounted from his elephant as usual, the beaters said, and with but one attendant had advanced up the bed of a dry creek. This was quite like Warwick Sahib, and Little Shikara felt himself tingling again. Other hunters, particularly many of the rich sahibs from across the sea, shot their tigers from the security of the *howdah;* but

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"And some time I—I, thine own son, will be a killer of tigers, even as Warwick Sahib."

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this wasn't Warwick's way of doing. The male tiger had risen snarling from his lair, and had been felled at the first shot.

Most of the villagers had supposed that the story would end at this point. Warwick Sahib's tiger hunts were usually just such simple and expeditious affairs. The gun would lift to his shoulder, the quiet eyes would glance along the barrel—and the tiger, whether charging or standing still, would speedily die. But to-day there had been a curious epilogue. Just as the beaters had started toward the fallen animal, and the white Heaven-born's cigaret-case was open in his hand, Nahara, Nahar's great, tawny mate, had suddenly sprung forth from the bamboo thickets.

SHE drove straight to the nearest of the beaters. There was no time whatever for Warwick to take aim. His rifle leaped, like a live thing, in his arms, but not one of the horrified beaters had seen his eyes lower to the sights. Yet the bullet went home—they could tell by the way the tiger flashed to her breast in the grass.

Yet she was only wounded. One of the beaters, starting, had permitted a bough of a tree to whip Warwick in the face, and the blow had disturbed what little aim he had. It was almost a miracle that he had hit the great cat at all. At once the thickets had closed around her, and the beaters had been unable to drive her forth again.

The circle was silent thereafter. They seemed to be waiting for Khusru, one of the head men of the village, to give his opinion. He knew more about the wild animals than any mature native in the assembly, and his comments on the hunting stories were usually worth hearing.

"We will not be in the honored service of the Protector of the Poor at this time a year from now," he said.

They all waited tensely. Shikara shivered. "Speak, Khusru," they urged him.

"Warwick Sahib will go again to the jungles—and Nahara will be waiting. She owes two debts. One is the killing of her mate—and ye know that these two tigers have been long and faithful mates. Do ye think she will let that debt go unpaid? She will also avenge her own wound."

"Perhaps she will die of bleeding," one of the others suggested.

"Nay, or ye would have found her this afternoon. Ye know that it is the wounded tiger that is most to be feared. One day, and he will go forth in pursuit of her again; and then ye will not see him riding back so grandly on his elephant. Perhaps she will come here, to carry away *our* children."

Again Shikara tingled—hoping that Nahara would at least come close enough to cause excitement. And that night, too happy to keep silent, he told his mother of Warwick Sahib's smile. "And some time I—I, thine own son," he said as sleepiness came upon him, "will be a killer of tigers, even as Warwick Sahib."

"Little sparrow-hawk," his mother laughed at him. "Little one of mighty words, only the great sahibs that come from afar, and Warwick Sahib himself, may hunt the tiger. So how canst thou, little worthless?"

"I will soon be grown," he persisted, "and I—I too—will some time return with such a tiger skin as the great Heaven-born brought this afternoon." Little Shikara was very sleepy, and he was telling his dreams much more frankly than was his wont. "And the village folk will come out to meet me with shoutings, and I will tell them of the shot—in the circle under the tree."

"And where, little hawk, wilt thou procure thine elephants, and such rupees as are needed?"

"Warwick Sahib shoots from the ground—and so will I. And sometimes he goes forth with only one attendant—and I will not need even one. And who can say—perhaps he will find me even a bolder man than Gunga Singhai; and he will take me in his place on the hunts in the jungles."

For Gunga Singhai was Warwick Sahib's own personal attendant and gun-carrier—the native that the Protector of the Poor could trust in the tightest places. So it was only to be expected that Little Shikara's mother should laugh at him. The idea of her son being an attendant of Warwick Sahib, not to mention a hunter of tigers, was only a tale to tell her husband when the boy's bright eyes were closed in sleep.

"Nay, little man," she told him. "Would I want thee torn to pieces in Nahara's claws? Would I want thee smelling of the jungle again, as thou didst after chasing the water-buck through the bamboos? Nay—thou wilt be a herdsman, like thy father—and perhaps gather many rupees."

But Little Shikara did not want to think of rupees. Even now, as sleep came to him, his childish spirit had left the circle of thatch roofs, and had gone on tremulous expeditions into the jungle. Far away, the trumpet-call of a wild tusker trembled through the moist, hot night; and great bell-shaped flowers made the air pungent and heavy with perfume. A tigress skulked somewhere in a thicket licking an injured leg with her rough tongue, pausing to listen to every sound the night gave forth. Little Shikara whispered in his sleep.

A half mile distant, in his richly furnished bungalow, Warwick Sahib dozed over his after-dinner cigar. He was in evening clothes, and crystal and silver glittered on his board. But his gray eyes were half-closed; and the gleam from his plate could not pass the long, dark lashes. For his spirit was far distant too—on the jungle trails with that of Little Shikara.

II

ONE sunlit morning, perhaps a month after the skin of Nahar was brought in from the jungle, Warwick Sahib's mail was late. It was an unheard-of thing. Always before, just as the clock struck eight, he would hear the cheerful tinkle of the postman's bells. At first he considered complaining; but as morning drew to early afternoon, he began to believe that investigation would be the wiser course.

The postman's route carried him along an old elephant-trail through a patch of thick jungle beside one of the tributaries of the Manipur. When natives went out to look, he was neither on the path nor drowned in the creek, nor yet in his thatched hut at the other end of his route. The truth was that this particular postman's bells would never be heard by human ears again. And there was enough evidence in the wet mold of the trail to know what had occurred.

That night the circle under the tree was silent and shivering. "Who is next?" they asked of one another. The jungle night came down, breathless and mysterious, and now and then a twig was cracked by a heavy foot at the edge of the thickets. In Warwick's house, the great Protector of the Poor took his rifles from their cases and fitted them together.

"To-morrow," he told Gunga Singhai, "we will settle for that postman's death."

Singhai breathed deeply, but said nothing. Perhaps his dark eyes brightened. The tiger-hunts were nearly as great a delight to him as they were to Warwick himself.

But while Nahara, lame from Warwick's bullet, could no longer overtake cattle, she did with great skilfulness avoid the onrush of the beaters. Again Little Shikara waited at the village gate for his hero to return; but the beaters walked silently to-night. Nor were there any tales to be told under the tree.

Nahara, a fairly respectable cattle-killer before, had become in a single night one of the worst terrors of India. Of course she was still a coward, but she had learned, by virtue of a chance meeting with a postman on a trail after a week of heart-devouring starvation, two or three extremely portentous lessons. One of them was that not even the little deer, drinking beside the Manipur, died half so easily as these tall, forked forms of which she had previously been so afraid. She found out also that they could neither run swiftly nor walk silently, and they could be approached easily even by a tiger that cracked a twig with every step. It simplified the problem of living immensely; and just as any other feline would have done, she took the line of least resistance. If there had been plenty of carrion in the jungle, Nahara might never have hunted men. But the kites and the jackals looked after the carrion; and they were much swifter and keener-eyed than a lame tiger.

SHE knew enough not to confine herself to one village; and it is rather hard to explain how any lower creature, that obviously can not reason, could have possessed this knowledge. Perhaps it was because she had learned that a determined hunt, with many beaters and men on elephants, invariably followed her killings. It was always well to travel just as far as possible from the scene. She found out also that, just as a doe is easier felled than a horned buck, certain of this new kind of game were more easily taken than the others. Sometimes children played at the door of their huts, and sometimes old men were afflicted with such maladies that they could not flee at all. All these things Nahara learned; and in learning them she caused a certain civil office of the British Empire to put an exceedingly large price on her head.

Gradually the fact dawned on her that unlike the deer and the buffalo, this new game was more easily hunted in the daylight—particularly in that tired-out, careless twilight hour when the herders and the plantation hands came in from their work. At night the village folk kept in their huts, and such wood-cutters and gipsies as slept without wakened every hour to tend their fires. Nahara was deathly afraid of fire. Night after night she would creep round and round a gipsy camp, her eyes like two pale blue moons in the darkness, and would never dare attack.

And from these she was taking her living in

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a manner forbidden by the laws of the jungle, the glory and beauty of her youth quickly departed from her. There are no prisons for those that break the jungle laws, no courts and no appointed officers; but because these are laws that go down to the roots of life, punishment is always swift and inevitable. "Thou shalt not kill men," is the first law of the wild creatures; and every one knows that any animal or breed of animals that breaks this law has sooner of later been hunted down and slain—just like any other murderer. The mange came upon her, and she lost flesh, and certain of her teeth began to come out. She was no longer the beautiful female of her species, to be sung to by the weaver-birds as she passed beneath. She was a hag and a vampire, hatred of whom lay deep in every human heart in her hunting range.

Often the hunting was poor, and sometimes she went many days in a stretch without making a single kill. And in all beasts, high and low, this is the last step to the worst degeneracy of all. It instills a curious, terrible kind of blood-lust—to kill, not once, but as many times as possible in the same hunt; to be content not with one death, but to slay and slay until the whole herd is destroyed. It is the instinct that makes a little weasel kill all the chickens in a coop, when one was all it could possibly carry away, and that will cause a wolf to leap from sheep to sheep in a fold until every one is dead. Nahara didn't get a chance to kill every day; so when the opportunity did come, like a certain pitiable kind of human hunter who comes from afar to hunt small game, she killed as many times as she could in quick succession. And the British Empire raised the price on her head.

One afternoon found her within a half-mile of Warwick's bungalow, and for five days she had gone without food. One would not have thought of her as a royal tigress, the queen of the felines and one of the most beautiful of all living things. And since she was still tawny and graceful, it would be hard to understand why she no longer gave the impression of beauty. It was simply gone, as a flame goes, and her queenliness was wholly departed too. In some vague way she had become a poisonous, a ghastly thing, to be named with such outcasts as the jackals or hyenas.

EXCESSIVE hunger, in most of the flesh-eating animals, is really a first cousin to madness. It brings bad dreams and visions, and, worst of all, it induces an insubordination to all the forest laws of man and beast. A well-fed wolf-pack will run in stark panic from a human being; but even the wisest of mountaineers do not care to meet the same gray band in the starving times of winter. Starvation brings recklessness, a desperate frenzied courage that is likely to upset all of one's preconceived notions as to the behavior of animals. It also brings, so that all men may be aware of its presence, a peculiar lurid glow to the balls of the eyes.

In fact, the two pale circles of fire were the most noticeable characteristics of the long, tawny cat that crept through the bamboos. Except for them, she would hardly have been discernible at all. The yellow grass made a perfect background, her black stripes looked like the streaks of shadow between the stalks of bamboo, and for one that is lame she crept with an astounding silence. One couldn't have believed that such a great creature could lie so close to the earth and be so utterly invisible in the low thickets.

A little peninsula of dwarf bamboos and tall jungle grass extended out into the pasture before the village and Nahara crept out clear to its point. She didn't seem to be moving. One couldn't catch the stir and draw of muscles. And yet she slowly glided to the end; then began her wait: Her head sunk low, her body grew tense, her tail whipped softly back and forth, with as easy a motion as the swaying of a serpent. The light flamed and died and flamed and died again in her pale eyes.

SOON a villager, who had been working in Warwick's fields, came trotting in Oriental fashion across the meadow. His eyes were only human, and he did not see the tawny shape in the tall grass. If any one had told him that a full-grown tigress could have crept to such a place and still remained invisible, he would have laughed. He was going to his thatch hut, to brown wife and babies, and it was no wonder that he trotted swiftly. The muscles of the great cat bunched, and now the whipping tail began to have a little vertical motion that is the final warning of a spring.

The man was already in leaping range; but the tiger had learned, in many experiences, always to make sure. Still she crouched—a single instant in which the trotting native came two paces nearer. Then the man drew up with a gasp of fright.

For just as the clear outlines of an object that has long been concealed in a maze of light and shadow will often leap, with sudden vividness, to the eyes, the native suddenly perceived the tiger.

He caught the whole dread picture—the crouching form, the terrible blue lights of the eyes, the whipping tail. The gasp he uttered from his closing throat seemed to act like the fall of a firing-pin against a shell on the bunched muscles of the animal; and she left her covert in a streak of tawny light.

But Nahara's leaps had never been quite accurate since she had been wounded by Warwick's bullet, months before. They were usually straight enough for the general purposes of hunting, but they missed by a long way the "theoretical center of impact" of which artillery officers speak. Her lame paw always seemed to disturb her balance. By remembering it, she could usually partly overcome the disadvantage; but to-day, in the madness of her hunger, she had been unable to remember anything except the terrible rapture of killing. This circumstance alone, however, would not have saved the native's life. Even though her fangs missed his throat, the power of the blow and her rending talons would have certainly snatched away his life as a storm snatches a leaf. But there was one other determining factor. The Burman had seen the tiger just before she leaped; and although there had been no time for conscious thought, his guardian reflexes had flung him to one side in a single frenzied effort to miss the full force of the spring.

The result of both these things was that he received only an awkward, sprawling blow from the animal's shoulder. Of course he was hurled to the ground; for no human body in the world is built to withstand the ton or so of shocking power of a three-hundred-pound cat leaping through the air. The tigress sprawled down also, and because she lighted on her wounded paw, she squealed with pain. It was possibly three seconds before she had forgotten the stabbing pain in her paw and had gathered herself to spring on the unconscious form of the native. And that three seconds gave Warwick Sahib, sitting at the window of his study, an opportunity to seize his rifle and fire.

Warwick knew tigers, and he had kept the rifle always ready for just such a need as this. The distance was nearly five hundred yards, and the bullet went wide of its mark. Nevertheless, it saved the native's life. The great cat remembered this same far-off explosion from another day, in a dry creek-bed of months before, and the sing of the bullet was a remembered thing too. Although it would speedily return to her, her courage fled and she turned and raced into the bamboos.

In an instant, Warwick was on his great veranda, calling his beaters. Gunga Singhai, his faithful gun-carrier, slipped shells into the magazine of his master's high-calibered close-range tiger-rifle. "The elephant, Sahib?" he asked swiftly.

"Nay, this will be on foot. Make the beaters circle about the fringe of bamboos. Thou and I will cross the eastern fields and shoot at her as she breaks through."

But there was really no time to plan a complete campaign. Even now, the first gray of twilight was blurring the sharp outlines of the jungle, and the soft jungle night was hovering, ready to descend. Warwick's plan was to cut through to a certain little creek that flowed into the river and with Singhai to continue on to the edge of the bamboos that overlooked a wide field. The beaters would prevent the tigress from turning back beyond the village, and it was at least possible that he would get a shot at her as she burst from the jungle and crossed the field to the heavier thickets beyond.

"Warwick Sahib walks into the teeth of his enemy," Khusru, the hunter, told a little group that watched from the village gate. "Nahara will collect her debts."

A little brown boy shivered at his words and wondered if the beaters would turn and kick him, as they had always done before, if he should attempt to follow them. It was the tiger-hunt, in view of his own village, and he sat down tremulous with rapture in the grass to watch. It was almost as if his dream--that he himself should be a hunter of tigers—was coming true. He wondered why the beaters seemed to move so slowly and with so little heart.

He would have known if he could have looked into their eyes. Each black pupil was framed with white. Human hearts grow shaken and bloodless from such sights as this they had just seen, and only the heart of a jungle creature—the heart of the eagle that the jungle gods, by some unheard-of fortune, had put in the beast of Little Shikara—could prevail against them. Besides, the superstitious Burmans thought that Warwick was walking straight to his death—that the time had come for Nahara to collect her debts.

III

WARWICK SAHIB and Singhai disappeared at once into the fringe of jungle, and silence immediately fell upon them. The cries of the beaters at once

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Little Shikara rested the gun on Warwick's body; and together, the strangest pair of huntsmen the Indian stars ever looked down upon, they waited.

seemed curiously dim. It was as if no sound could live in the great silences under the arching trees. Soon it was as if they were alone.

They walked side by side, Warwick with his rifle held ready. He had no false ideas in regard to this tiger hunt. He knew that his prey was desperate with hunger, that she had many old debts to pay, and that she would charge on sight.

The self-rage that is felt on missing some particularly fortunate chance is not confined to human beings alone. There is an old saying in the forest that a feline that has missed his stroke is like a jackal in dog-days—and that means that it is not safe to be anywhere in the region with him. He simply goes rabid and is quite likely to leap at the first living thing that stirs. Warwick knew that Nahara had just been cheated out of her kill and some one in the jungle would pay for it.

The gaudy birds that looked down from the tree-branches could scarcely recognize this prematurely gray man as a hunter. He walked rather quietly, yet with no conscious effort toward stealth. The rifle rested easily in his arms, his gray eyes were quiet and thoughtful as always. Singularly, his splendid features were quite in repose. The Burman, however, had more of the outer signs of alertness; and yet there was none of the blind terror upon him that marked the beaters.

"Where are the men?" Warwick asked quietly. "It is strange that we do not hear them shouting."

"They are afraid, Sahib," Singhai replied. "The forest pigs have left us to do our own hunting."

Warwick corrected him with a smile. "Forest pigs are brave enough," he answered. "They are sheep—just sheep—sheep of the plains."

The broad trail divided, like a three-tined candlestick, into narrow trails. Warwick halted beside the center of the three that led to the creek they were obliged to cross. Just for an instant he stood watching, gazing into the deep-blue dusk of the deeper jungle. Twilight was falling softly. The trails soon vanished into shadow—patches of deep gloom, relieved here and there by a bright leaf that reflected the last twilight rays. A living creature coughed and rustled away in the thickets beside him.

"There is little use of going on," he said. "It is growing too dark. But there will be killings before the dawn if we don't get her first."

THE servant stood still, waiting. It was not his place to advise his master.

"If we leave her, she'll come again before the dawn. Many of the herders haven't returned—she'll get one of them sure. At least we may cross the creek and get a view of the great fields. She is certain to cross them if she has heard the beaters."

In utter silence they went on. One hundred yards farther they came to the creek, and both strode in together to ford.

The water was only knee-deep, but Warwick's boots sank three inches in the mud of the bottom. And at that instant the gods of the jungle, always waiting with drawn simitar for the unsuspecting, turned against them.

Singhai suddenly splashed down into the water, on his hands and knees. He did not cry out. If he made any sound at all, it was just a shivering gasp that the splash of water wholly obscured. But the thing that brought home the truth to Warwick was the pain that flashed, vivid as lightning, across his dark face; and the horror of death that left its shadow. Something churned and writhed in the mud; and then Warwick fired.

Both of them had forgotten Mugger, the crocodile, that so loves to wait in the mud of a ford. He had seized Singhai's foot, and had already snatched him down into the water when Warwick fired. No living flesh can withstand the terrible, rending shock of a high-powered sporting rifle at close range. Mugger had plates of armor, but even these could not have availed against it if he had been exposed to the fire. As it was, several inches of water stood between, a more effective armor than a two-inch steel plate on a battleship. Of course the shock carried through, a smashing blow that caused the reptile to release his hold on Singhai's leg; but before the native could get to his feet he had struck again. The next instant both men were fighting for their lives.

They fought with their hands, and Warwick fought with his rifle, and the native slashed again and again with the long knife that he carried at his belt. To a casual glance, a crocodile is wholly incapable of quick action. These two found him a slashing, darting, wolf-like thing, lunging with astounding speed through the muddied water, knocking them from their feet and striking at them as they fell.

The reptile was only half-grown, but in the water they had none of the usual advantages that man has over the beasts with which he does battle. Warwick could not find a target for his rifle. But even human bodies, usually so weak, find themselves possessed of an amazing reserve strength and agility in the moment of need. These men realized perfectly that their lives were the stakes for which they fought, and they gave every ounce of strength and energy they had. Their aim was to hold the mugger off until they could reach the shore.

At last, by a lucky stroke, Singhai's knife blinded one of the lurid, reptile eyes. He was prone in the water when he administered it, and it went home just as the savage teeth were snapping at his throat.

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Then the little light that the moon poured down was suddenly reflected in Nahara's eyes. All at once they burned out of the dark, two blue-green circles of fire.

For an instant the great reptile flopped in an impotent half-circle, partly reared out of the water. It gave Warwick a chance to shoot, a single instant in which the rifle seemed to whirl about in his arms, drive to his shoulder, and blaze in the deepening twilight. And the shot went true. It pierced the mugger from beneath, tearing upward through the brain. And then the agitated waters of the ford slowly grew quiet.

The last echo of the report was dying when Singhai stretched his bleeding arms about Warwick's body, caught up the rifle and dragged them forty feet up on the shore. It was an effort that cost the last of his strength. And as the stars popped out of the sky, one by one, through the gray of dusk the two men lay silent, side by side, on the grassy bank.

Warwick was the first to regain consciousness. At first he didn't understand the lashing pain in his wrists, the strange numbness in one of his legs, the darkness with the great white Indian stars shining through. Then he remembered. And he tried to stretch his arm to the prone form beside him.

The attempt was an absolute failure. The cool brain dispatched the message, it flew along the telegraph-wires of the nerves, but the muscles refused to react. He remembered that the teeth of the mugger had met in one of the muscles of his upper arm, but before unconsciousness had come upon him he had been able to lift the gun to shoot. Possibly infection from the bite had in some manner temporarily paralyzed the arm. He turned, wracked with pain, on his side and lifted his left arm. In doing so his hand crossed before his eyes—and then he smiled wanly in the darkness.

It was quite like Warwick, sportsman and English gentleman, to smile at a time like this. Even in the gray darkness of the jungle night he could see the hand quite plainly. It no longer looked slim and white. And he remembered that the mugger had caught his fingers in one of its last rushes.

He paused only for one glance at the mutilated member. He knew that his first work was to see how Singhai had fared. In that glance he was boundlessly relieved to see that the hand could unquestionably be saved. The fingers were torn, yet their bones did not seem to be severed. Temporarily at least, however, the hand was utterly useless. The fingers felt strange and detached.

He reached out to the still form beside him, touching the dark skin first with his fingers, and then, because they had ceased to function, with the flesh of his wrist. He expected to find it cold. Singhai was alive, however, and his warm blood beat close to the dark skin.

But he was deeply unconscious, and it was possible that one foot was hopelessly mutilated.

FOR a moment Warwick lay quite still, looking his situation squarely in the face. He did not believe that either he or his attendant was mortally or even very seriously hurt. True, one of his arms had suffered paralysis, but there was no reason for thinking it had been permanently injured. His hand would be badly scarred, but soon as good as ever. The real question that faced them was that of getting back to the bungalow.

Walking was out of the question. His whole body was brusied and lacerated, and he was already dangerously weak from loss of blood. It would take all his energy, these first few hours, to keep his consciousness. Besides, it was perfectly obvious that Singhai could not walk. And English gentlemen do not desert their servants at a time like this. The real mystery lay in the fact that the beaters had not already found and rescued them.

He wore a watch with luminous dial on his left wrist, and he managed to get it before his eyes. And then understanding came to him. A full hour had passed since he and his servant had fought the mugger in the ford. And the utter silence of early night had come down over the jungle.

There was only one thing to believe. The beaters had evidently heard him shoot, sought in vain for him in the thickets, possibly passed within a few hundred feet of him, and because he had been unconscious he had not heard them or called to them, and now they had given him up for lost. He remembered with bittereness how all of them had been sure that an encounter with Nahara would cost him his life, and would thus be all the more quick to believe he had died in her talons. Nahara had her mate and her own lameness to avenge, they had said, attributing in their superstitition human emotions to the brute natures of animals. It would have been quite useless for Warwick to attempt to tell them that the male tiger, in the mind of her wicked mate, was no longer even a memory, and that premeditated vengeance is an emotion almost unknown in the animal world. Without leaders or encouragement, and terribly frightened by the scene they had beheld before the village, they had quickly given up any attempt to find his body. There had been none among them cool-headed enough to reason out which trail he had likely taken, and thus look for him by the ford. Likely they were already huddled in their thatch huts, waiting till daylight.

Then he called into the darkness. A heavy body brushed through the creepers, and stepping falsely, broke a twig. He thought at first that it might be one of the villagers, coming to look for him. But at once the step was silenced.

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Warwick had a disturbing thought that the creature that had broken the twig had not gone away, but was crouching down, in a curious manner, in the deep shadows. Nahara had returned to her hunting.

IV

"SOME time I too will be a hunter of tigers," Little Shikara told his mother when the beaters began to circle through the bamboos. "To carry a gun beside Warwick Sahib—and to be honored in the circle under the tree!"

But his mother hardly listened. She was quivering with fright. She had seen the last part of the drama in front of the village; and she was too frightened even to notice the curious imperturbability of her little son. But there was no orderly retreat after Little Shikara had heard the two reports of the rifle. At first there were only the shouts of the beaters, singularly high-pitched, much running back and forth in the shadows, and then a pell-mell scurry to the shelter of the villages.

For a few minutes there was wild excitement at the village gates. Warwick Sahib was dead, they said—they had heard the shots and run to the place of firing, and beat up and down through the bamboos; and Warwick Sahib had surely been killed and carried off by the tigress. This dreadful story told, most of the villagers went to hide at once in their huts; only a little circle of the bravest men hovered at the gate. They watched with drawn faces the growing darkness.

But there was one among them who was was not yet a man-grown; a boy so small that he could hover, unnoticed, in the very smallest of the terrible shadow-patches. He was Little Shikara, and he was shocked to the very depths of his worshiping heart. For Warwick had been his hero, the greatest man of all time, and he felt himself burning with indignation that the beaters should return so soon. And it was a curious fact that he had not as yet been infected with the contagion of terror that was being passed from man to man among the villagers. Perhaps his indignation was too absorbing an emotion to leave room for terror, and perhaps, far down in his childish spirit, he was made of different stuff. He was a child of the jungle, and perhaps he had shared of that great imperturbability and impassiveness that is the eternal trait of the wildernesses.

He went up to one of the younger beaters who had told and retold a story of catching a glimpse of Nahara in the thickets until no one was left to tell it to. He was standing silent, and Little Shikara thought it possible that he might reach his ears.

"Give ear, Puran," he pleaded. "Didst thou look for his body beside the ford over Tarai stream?"

"Nay, little one—though I passed within one hundred paces."

"Dost thou not know that he and Singhai would of a certainty cross at the ford to reach the fringe of jungle from which he might watch the Eastern field? Some of you looked on the trail beside the ford, but none looked at the ford itself. And the sound of the rifle seemed to come from thence."

"But why did he not call out?"

"Dead men could not call, but at least ye might have frightened Nahara from the body. But perhaps he is wounded, unable to speak, and lies there still——"

But Puran had found another listener for his story, and speedily forgot the boy. He hurried over to another of the villagers, Khusru the hunter.

"Did no one look by the ford?" he asked, almost sobbing. "For that is the place he had gone."

The native's eyes seemed to light. "*Hai*, little one, thou hast thought of what thy elders had forgotten. There is level land there, and clear. And I shall go at the first ray of dawn——"

"But not to-night, Khusru——?"

"Nay, little sinner! Wouldst thou have me torn to pieces?"

Lastly Little Shikara went to his own father, and they had a moment's talk at the outskirts of the throng. But the answer was nay—just the same. Even his brave father would not go to look for the body until daylight came. The boy felt his skin prickling all over.

"But perhaps he is only wounded—and left to die. If I go and return with word that he is there, wilt thou take others and go out and bring him in?"

"*Thou* goest!" His father broke forth in a great roar of laughter. "Why, thou little hawk! One would think that thou wert a hunter of tigers thyself!"

Little Shikara blushed beneath the laughter. For he was a very boyish little boy in most ways. But it seemed to him that his sturdy young heart was about to break open from bitterness. All of them agreed that Warwick Sahib, perhaps wounded and dying, might be lying by the ford, but none of them would venture forth to see. Unknowing, he was beholding the expression of a certain age-old trait of human nature. Men do not fight ably in the dark. They need their eyes, and they particularly require a definite object to give them determination. If these villagers knew for certain that the Protector of the Poor lay wounded or even dead beside the ford, they would have rallied bravely, encouraged one another with words and oaths, and gone forth to rescue him; but they wholly lacked the courage to venture again into the jungle on any such blind quest as Little Shikara suggested.

BUT the boy's father should not have laughed. He should have remembered the few past occasions when his straight little son had gone into the jungle alone; and that remembrance should have silenced him. The difficulty lay in the fact that he supposed his boy and he were of the same flesh, and that Little Shikara shared his own great dread of the night-curtained jungle. In this he was very badly mistaken. Little Shikara had an inborn understanding and love of the jungle; and except for such material dangers as that of Nahara, he was not afraid of it at all. He had no superstitions in regard to it. Perhaps he was too young. But the main thing that the laugh did was to set off, as a match sets off powder, a whole heartful of unexploded indignation in Shikara's breast. These villagers not only had deserted their patron and protector, but also they had laughed at the thought of rescue! His own father had laughed at him.

Little Shikara silently left the circle of villagers and turned into the darkness.

At once the jungle silence closed round him. He hadn't dreamed that the noise of the villagers would die so quickly. Although he could still see the flame of the fire at the village gate behind him, it was almost as if he had at once dropped off into another world. Great flowers poured perfume down upon him, and at seemingly a great distance he heard the faint murmur of the wind.

At first, deep down in his heart, he had really not intended to go all the way. He had expected to steal clear to the outer edge of the firelight; and then stand listening to the darkness for such impressions as the jungle would choose to give him. But there had been no threshold, no interlude of preparation. The jungle in all its mystery had folded about him at once.

He trotted softly down the elephant trail, a dim, fleet shadow that even the keen eyes of Nahara could scarcely have seen. At first he was too happy to be afraid. He was always happy when the jungle closed round him. Besides, if Nahara had killed, she would be full-fed by now and not to be feared. Little Shikara hastened on, trembling all over with a joyous sort of excitement.

IF A single bird had flapped its wings in the branches, if one little rodent had stirred in the underbrush, Little Shikara would likely have turned back. But the jungle-gods, knowing their son, stilled all the forest voices. He crept on, still looking now and again over his shoulder to see the village fire. It still made a bright yellow triangle in the dusk behind him. He didn't stop to think that he was doing a thing most grown natives and many white men would not have dared to do—to follow a jungle trail unarmed at night. If he had stopped to think at all, he simply would have been unable to go on. He was only following his instincts, voices that such forces as maturity and grown-up intelligence and self-consciousness obscure in older men—and the terror of the jungle could not touch him. He went straight to do what service he could for the white sahib that was one of his lesser gods.

Time after time he halted, but always he pushed on a few more feet. Now he was over half-way to the ford, clear to the forks in the trail. And then he turned about with a little gasp of fear.

The light from the village had gone out. The thick foliage of the jungle had come between.

He was really frightened now. It wasn't that he was afraid he couldn't get back. The trail was broad and hard and quite gray in the moonlight. But those far-off beams of light had been a solace to his spirit, a reminder that he had not yet broken all ties with the village. He halted, intending to turn back.

Then a thrill began at his scalp and went clear to his bare toes. Faint through the jungle silences he heard Warwick Sahib calling to his faithless beaters. The voice had an unmistakable quality of distress.

Certain of the villagers—a very few of them—said afterward that Little Shikara continued on because he was afraid to go back. They said that he looked upon the Heaven-born Sahib as a source of all power, in whose protection no harm could befall him, and he sped toward him because the distance was shorter than back to the haven of fire at the village. But those who could look deeper into Little Shikara's soul knew different. In some degree at least he

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hastened on down that jungle trail of peril because he knew this his idol was in distress, and by laws that went deep he knew he must go to his aid.

V

THE first few minutes after Warwick had heard a living step in the thickets he spent in trying to reload his rifle. He carried other cartridges in the right-hand trousers pocket, but after a few minutes of futile effort it became perfectly evident that he was not able to reach them. His right arm was useless, and the fingers of his left, lacerated by the mugger's bite, refused to take hold.

He had, however, three of the five shells the rifle held still in his gun. The single question that remained was whether or not they would be of use to him.

The rifle lay half under him, its stock protruding from beneath his body. With the elbow of his left arm, he was able to work it out. Considering the difficulties under which he worked, he made amazingly few false motions; and yet he worked with swiftness. Warwick was a man who had been schooled and trained by many dangers; he had learned to face them with open eyes and steady hands, to judge with unclouded thought the exact per cent. of his chances. He knew now that he must work swiftly. The shape in the shadow was not going to wait all night.

But at that moment the hope of preserving his life that he had clung to until now broke like a bubble in the sunlight. He could not lift the gun to swing and aim it at a shape in the darkness. With his mutilated hands he could not cock the strong-springed hammer. And if he could do both these things with his fumbling, bleeding, lacerated fingers, his right hand could not be made to pull the trigger. Warwick Sahib knew at last just where he stood. Yet if human sight could have penetrated that dusk, it would have beheld no change of expression in the lean face.

An English gentleman lay at the frontier of death. But that occasioned neither fawning nor a loss of his rigid self-control.

Two things remained, however, that he might do. One was to call and continue to call, as long as life lasted in his body. He knew perfectly that more than once in the history of India a tiger had been kept at a distance, at least for a short period of time, by shouts alone. In that interlude, perhaps help might come from the village. The second thing was almost as impossible as raising and firing the rifle; but by the luck of the gods he might achieve it. He wanted to find Singhai's knife and hold it compressed in his palm.

It wasn't that he had any vain hopes of repelling the tiger's attack with a single knife-blade that would be practically impossible for his mutilated hand to hold. Nahara had five or so knife-blades in every paw and a whole set of them in her mouth. She could stand on four legs and fight, and Warwick could not lift himself on one elbow and yet wield the blade. But there were other things to be done with blades, even held loosely in the palm, at a time like this.

He knew rather too much of the way of tigers. They do not always kill swiftly. It is the tiger way to tease, long moments, with half-bared talons; to let the prey crawl away a few feet for the rapture of leaping at it again; to fondle with an exquisite cruelty for moments that seem endless to its prey. A knife, on the other hand, kills quickly. Warwick much preferred the latter death.

And even as he called, again and again, he began to feel about in the grass with his lacerated hand for the hilt of the knife. Nahara was steadily stealing toward him through the shadows.

The great tigress was at the height of her hunting madness. The earlier adventure of the evening when she had missed her stroke, the stir and tumult of the beaters in the wood, her many days of hunger, had all combined to intensify her passion. And finally there had come the knowledge, in subtle ways, that two of her own kind of game were lying wounded and helpless beside the ford.

But even the royal tiger never forgets some small measure of its caution. She did not charge at once. The game looked so easy that it was in some way suggestive of a trap. She crept forward, a few feet at a time. The wild blood began to leap through the great veins. The hair went stiff on the neck muscles.

But Warwick shouted; and the sound for an instant appalled her. She lurked in the shadows. And then, as she made a false step, Warwick heard her for the first time.

AGAIN she crept forward, to pause when Warwick raised his voice the second time. The man knew enough to call at intervals rather than continuously. A long, continued outcry would very likely stretch the tiger's nerves to a breaking-point and hurl her into a frenzy that would probably result in a death-dealing charge. Every few seconds he called again. In the intervals between, the tiger crept forward. Her excitement grew upon her. She crouched lower. Her sinewy tail had whipped softly at first; now it was lashing almost to her sides. And finally it began to have a slight vertical movement that Warwick, fortunately for his spirit, could not see.

Then the little light that the moon poured down was suddenly reflected in Nahara's eyes. All at once they burned out of the dusk; two blue-green circles of fire fifty feet distant in the darkness. At that Warwick gasped—for the first time. In another moment the great cat would be in range—and he had not yet found the knife. Nothing remained to believe but that it was lost in the mud of the ford, fifty feet distant, and that the last dread avenue of escape was cut off.

But at that instant the gasp gave way to a whispered oath of wonder. Some living creature was running lightly down the trail toward him—soft, light feet that came with amazing swiftness. For once in his life Warwick did not know where he stood. For once he was the chief figure of a situation he did not entirely understand. He tried to probe into the darkness with his tired eyes.

"Here I am!" he called. The tiger, starting to creep forward once more, halted at the voice. A small, straight figure sped like an arrow out of the thickets and halted at his side.

It was such an astounding appearance as for an instant completely paralyzes the mental faculties. Warwick's first emotion was simply a great and hopeless astonishment. Long inured to the mystery of the jungle, he thought he had passed the point where any earthly happening could actually bewilder him. But in spite of it, in spite of the fire-eyed peril in the darkness, he was quite himself when he spoke. The voice that came out of the silence was wholly steady—a kindly, almost amused voice of one who knows life as it is and who has mastered his own destiny.

"Who in the world?" he asked in the vernacular.

"It is I—Little Shikara," a tremulous voice answered. Except for the tremor he could not keep from his tone, he spoke as one man to another.

Warwick knew at once that Little Shikara was not yet aware of the presence of the tiger, fifty feet distant in the shadows. But he knew nothing else. The whole situation was beyond his ken.

But his instincts were manly and true. "Then run speedily, little one," he whispered, "back to the village. There is danger here in the dark."

Little Shikara tried to speak, and he swallowed painfully. A lump had come in his throat that at first would not let him talk. "Nay, Protector of the Poor!" he answered. "I—I came alone. And I—I am thy servant."

Warwick's heart bounded. Not since his youth had left him, to a gray world, had his strong heart leaped in just this way before. "Merciful God!" he whispered in English. "Has a child come to save me?" Then he whipped again into the vernacular and spoke swiftly; for no further seconds were to be wasted. "Little Shikara, have you ever fired a gun?"

"No, Sahib——"

"Then lift it up and rest it across my body. Thou knowest how it is held——"

Little Shikara didn't know exactly, but he rested the gun on Warwick's body; and he had seen enough target practise to crook his finger about the trigger. And together, the strangest pair of huntsmen that the Indian stars ever looked down upon, they waited.

"It is Nahara," Warwick explained softly. For he had decided to be frank with Little Shikara, trusting all to the courage of a child. "It all depends on thee. Pull back the hammer with thy thumb."

Little Shikara obeyed. He drew it back until it clicked, and did not, as Warwick had feared, let it slip through his fingers back against the breach. "Yes, Sahib," he whispered breathlessly. His little brave heart seemed about to explode in his breast. But it was the test, and he knew he must not waver in the sahib's eyes.

"IT IS Nahara, and thou art a man," Warwick said again. "And now thou must wait until thou seest her eyes."

So they strained into the darkness; and in an instant more they saw again the two circles of greenish, smoldering fire. They were quite near now—Nahara was almost in leaping range.

"Thou wilt look through the little hole at the rear and then along the barrel," Warwick ordered swiftly, "and thou must see the two eyes along the little notch in front."

"I see, Sahib—and between the eyes," came the same breathless whisper. The little brown body held quite still. Warwick could not even feel it trembling against his own. For the moment, by virtue of some strange prank of Shiv, the jungle gods were giving their own strength

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to this little brown son of theirs beside the ford.

"Thou wilt not jerk or move?"

"Nay, Sahib." And he spoke true. The world might break to pieces or blink out, but he would not throw off his aim by any terror motions. They could see the tiger's outline now—the lithe, low-hung body, the tail that twitched up and down.

"Then pull the trigger," Warwick whispered.

The whole jungle world rocked and trembled from the violence of the report.

WHEN the villagers, aroused by the roar of the rifle and led by Khusru and Puran and Little Shikara's father, rushed down with their firebrands to the ford, their first thought was that they had come only to the presence of the dead. Three human beings lay very still beside the stream, and fifty feet in the shadows something else, that obviously was *not* a human being, lay very still too. But they were not to have any such horror story to tell their wives. Only one of the three by the ford, Singhai, the gun-bearer, was even really unconscious; Little Shikara, the rifle still held lovingly in his arms, had gone into a half-faint from fear and nervous exhaustion, and Warwick Sahib had merely closed his eyes to the darting light of the firebrands. The only death that had occurred was that of Nahara the tigress—and she had a neat hole bored completely through her neck. To all evidence, she had never stirred after Little Shikara's bullet had gone home.

After much confusion and shoutings and falling over one another, and gazing at Little Shikara as if he were some new kind of a ghost, the villagers got a stretcher each for Singhai and the Protector of the Poor. And when they got them well loaded into them, and Little Shikara had quite come to himself and was standing with some bewilderment in a circle of staring townspeople, a clear, commanding voice ordered that they all be silent. Warwick Sahib was going to make what was the nearest approach to a speech that he had made since various of his friends had decoyed him to a dinner in London some years before.

The words that he said, the short vernacular words that have a way of coming straight to the point, established Little Shikara as a legend through all that corner of British India. It was Little Shikara who had come alone through the jungle, said he; it was Little Shikara's shining eyes that had gazed along the barrel, and it was his own brown finger that had pulled the trigger. Thus, said Warwick, he would get the bounty that the British Government offered—British rupees that to a child's eyes would be past counting. Thus in time, with Warwick's influence, his would be a great voice through all of India. For small as he was, and not yet grown, he was of the true breed.

After the shouting was done, Warwick turned to Little Shikara to see how he thought upon all these things. "Thou shalt have training for the army, little one, where thy good nerve will be of use, and thou shalt be a native officer, along with the sons of princes. I, myself, will see to it, for I do not hold my life so cheap that I will forget the thing that thou hast done to-night."

And he meant what he said. The villagers stood still when they saw his earnest face. "And what, little hawk, wilt thou have more?" he asked.

Little Shikara trembled and raised his eyes. "Only sometimes to ride with thee, in thy *howdah*, as thy servant, when thou again seekest the tiger."

The whole circle laughed at this. They were just human, after all. Their firebrands were held high, and gleamed on Little Shikara's dusky face, and made a luster in his dark eyes. The circle, roaring with laughter, did not hear the Sahib's reply, but they did see him nod his head.

"I WOULD not dare go without thee now," Warwick told him.

And thus little Shikara's dreams came true—to be known through many villages as a hunter of tigers, and a brave follower and comrade of the forest trails. And thus he came into his own—in those far-off glades of Burma, in the jungles of the Manipur.

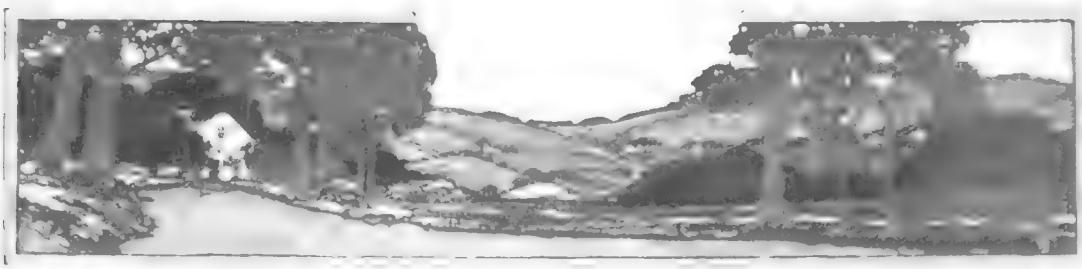
View-points

By Ira South

ALL polished brass and varnished steel,
Rolls the long, cool Pullman train.
Soft velvet lulls to drowsiness
And monotone of sound the brain.

Through the sheet of plated glass
An arid slope shows bare.
High up, the scattered flocks lie down
Or forage for a scanty fare.

Upon the lofty hill-slope, cool in the boulder's shade,
Sits Manuel, pastor of the goats, and makes his noonday meal,
And sees the distant dusty train
Crawl 'round his mountain foot
And, careless and content, lies back to pick his stringed guitar
And watch the distant foothills waver in the sun.



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Mrs. Hobbs remarked that some people were no better than Huns.

A Special Effort

By George Robey

The favorite of laughter-loving London theatre-goers, who combines the talents of versatile comedian, author-humorist, and popular entertainer, writes a sketch of a special constable's unprecedented efforts to preserve the peace. His philosophically disposed copper, who turns the other cheek in the face of attack and meets the most pressing emergencies with five-pound notes, is a fresh and amusing contribution to current fiction.

"GEORGE, dear," said my wife, "I've been reading your 'Reminiscences' again."

I was touched by this proof of the deep interest my wife takes in all that concerns me. I said so.

"Yes, dear," she replied, "and I am more than ever convinced that you have been too reserved. You have left too many things untold; things the public ought to be told."

"You know how I dislike boasting," I reminded her.

My wife looked at me with fond admiration. At least, I think that was what it was.

"Yes, dear, I know," she said. "But you are a public character, and you must not allow false modesty to come between you and the public's idea of you. They ought to see you as you really are. They ought to know all you've done."

"I would rather they didn't know," I remarked.

"Why, father?" asked George Junior. "Could they put you in prison?"

I told George not to be an idiot. I am sometimes afraid the boy is not very intelligent. For a lad of his age he shows an extraordinary lack of perception. He appears to have only the vaguest conception of my character, for instance.

My wife was thoughtless enough to laugh at George's mistake. But I could see she regretted it immediately afterward, for she remarked in a serious tone:

"Your father, George, can do no wrong. Always remember that. It is the foundation of family life."

"The public," continued my wife, "ought to know how you did your duty as a Special, George—and how you suffered for it."

I uttered a modest disclaimer. I told her that I did not wish to parade my actions before the world.

"Then if you won't, I will!" cried my wife. "I will write the story of Paradise Row!"

I gazed at her in consternation.

"I insist upon writing it," said my wife eagerly. "It is only right that some record of these things should be left for posterity, George. Posterity," she went on with growing enthusiasm, "shall see you with my eyes."

"The Lord forbid!" I ejaculated.

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A SPECIAL EFFORT

"Why, George, darling, whatever do you mean?" my wife inquired in a tone of intense surprise. "I am sure the public would be delighted with my picture of you."

"I am sure they would," I agreed. "But I do not wish the public to have a picture biased by wifely devotion. I don't want rubbish and hysteria of that sort brought in."

"Oh, George!" pleaded my wife.

"No," I told her firmly. "In my relations with the public, sentiment has got to be left out entirely. Sooner than allow you to drag in sentiment, I will write the bally story of Paradise Row myself."

AFTER all, perhaps my wife is right. It ought to be done. For the sake of posterity, therefore, I pen this record of my first night as a Special.

When they detailed me off for duty in Paradise Row, a small street in the East End of London, I said I was glad. My brother constables at the station seemed surprised. They did not think I ought to be glad. I told them I was interested in the East End. It was there that one saw life—the warm, pulsating life of the people, stripped of the shallow veneer of the more sophisticated residential suburbs.

My brother constables nudged each other and grinned. They said that if warm, pulsating life was what I wanted, I should most likely get it in Paradise Row.

At first sight of the place I was bitterly disappointed. It was a quiet street of small houses, looking serene and peaceful in the moonlight. The inhabitants appeared to be wrapped in slumber.

I reflected that I was the guardian of that peaceful street. These slumbering souls had been entrusted to my care. They were a sacred charge. Filled with that uplifting thought, I paced the length of the street and back again, fingering my whistle and from time to time unsheathing my truncheon to assure myself that it would slip in and out at a moment's notice should I require it.

I could not help wishing that something would happen—something that would enable me to show my mettle, to prove to myself and to the world that it was not in vain that I had answered the call of king and country.

For a time, nothing stirred: the only sign of life a black cat curled up upon a doorstep.

My gaze wandered from the black cat upon the doorstep to the geraniums neatly ranged in pots upon the window-ledge. I mused for a while upon the pleasant contrast of the black fur and the vivid green and red of the flowers. Then my attention was attracted by the figure of a small boy in the distance.

The boy was hurrying toward me, and as he drew nearer, I realized that he was in a state of intense excitement. It was evident that he required my help. Instantly I prepared to give it. Slightly hastening my steps and firmly grasping my truncheon, I went to meet the boy.

It flashed across my mind that there was something infinitely touching in the trust reposed in me by this little child. And I reflected that he was one of the thousands of helpless trusting creatures that looked to us, the representatives of law and order, in every emergency.

In that moment I realized to the full the immense scope and importance of our great police force—the vast responsibilities that rest upon our shoulders. And in that moment I registered a solemn vow that, come what might, I would always do my duty; I would never fail my weaker fellow men in their hour of need, no matter how difficult or dangerous the task imposed upon me.

"Wite one moment!" exclaimed the girl shrilly. "'Wite!' 'e says. It's all right! She's only bein' murdered! 'Wite while I finds me whistle!' You're a bloomin' 'ero, ain't yer?"

The boy was shouting something unintelligible in a childish treble. He was panting and out of breath when he reached me.

I addressed him kindly. I patted his head in a reassuring manner. I spoke in slow, measured, confidence-inspiring tones.

"WHAT is it, my little man? Don't be afraid to speak. I am here to help you."

The boy peered searchingly into my face. All at once he smiled. Again I was touched by the confidence and trust I read upon that childish face.

Then, clearly and distinctly, he uttered his behest:

"Please, sir, have you got any cigaret-pictures?"

At this remote period I do not remember the precise nature of my reply. It may be that I spoke hastily. It may be that I made use of ill-considered words. The boy, I recollect, made faces at me as he retired. He retired, walking backward, and making remarks of no significance whatever.

I was thinking out suitable replies which would, I feel convinced, have silenced the boy effectually had he remained to hear them, when, all at once, I heard a cry—a cry inexpressibly horrible, a cry that sounded scarcely human, as of some lost soul in torment.

I listened with wildly beating heart. Once more that cry.

I hurried in the direction of the sound, my shaking fingers clutching my truncheon.

Shrieks and howls rent the air. I saw what had happened: My black cat was no longer sleeping peacefully upon its doorstep. It was engaged in a desperate encounter with a feline of the tortoise-shell variety.

As they fought, clawing and spitting venom at one another, the combatants made horrid noises, ear-splitting and blood-curdling.

I tried to drive them apart. I brandished my truncheon. I yelled at them.

The black cat took a flying leap on to the window-ledge and landed in the middle of the geraniums, hotly pursued by the tortoise-shell. Between them, half the contents of the window-ledge were hurled into the street.

I stooped to pick up a geranium-pot. Closely following upon the crash of breaking pottery, new sounds struck upon my ear: The raising of a window-sash, a torrent of words, forceful, picturesque, but indicative of some annoyance. Then, a torrent of another sort, as of a basin of dirty water emptied over my upturned face.

Filled with righteous anger, with eyes smarting with soapy water, yet still clasping the flower-pot, I knocked at the door of that house. As the representative of law and order I could not allow the incident to pass unchallenged.

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I told myself that I would be firm yet not unduly severe with the perpetrator of the deed. In a few carefully selected phrases I would point out to him the danger and inconvenience caused by his impulsive action.

I heard heavy footsteps descending. Next moment a figure of a giant attired in a nightshirt loomed before me.

It was the most enormous man I have ever beheld. His light attire was well calculated to reveal his powerful frame and abnormally bulging muscles. The moon shed her rays upon his face and disclosed a countenance of a strangely forbidding nature.

He surveyed me with a hostile glare.

"Well, watcherwant?" he snarled in a fierce voice.

I realized that something had probably occurred to annoy this man. He seemed put out, not quite himself.

It would not be fair to harass him still further.

I felt sorry for the man. I determined to overlook his impulsive assault, which, after all, was probably intended for the cats. I would not even refer to the incident. I would show him that I bore him no ill-will. I would endeavor to reassure him, to put him at his ease. I therefore addressed him with nonchalance and detachment of manner.

"I apologize for disturbing you," I said, "but I believe this is your property." And I held out the flower-pot with a pleasant smile upon my face.

Next moment the giant had seized the flower-pot and hurled it back at me. It hit me right in the middle of my pleasant smile, rebounded thence, and fell in shattered fragments at my feet.

The giant made a movement toward me. Propelled by an irresistible force, I joined the geraniums upon the pavement. When I had gathered myself together, I noticed that the door of that house was closed. Its occupant had disappeared.

MY FIRST impulse was to call the fellow to account; to demand an explanation of his conduct; if necessary, to insist upon an apology.

Then I realized that there is a time for everything; and that this, most likely, was not the time.

I would let him sleep upon it. In the morning when we were both cooler—I would talk to him in the cool of the morning.

In the meantime those infernal cats—the cause of the whole trouble—I could hear them fighting still, farther up the street—fighting like fiends.

Once more full of righteous indignation, I dashed up to the beasts. I drove them apart. I pursued them.

The black cat climbed up the lamp-post, whither the wounds I had sustained forbade me follow.

The tortoise-shell devil continued to elude me on level ground. I chased it furiously with wild cries waving my truncheon. It darted up the street and leaped through an open window. There was a loud crash and the tinkle of broken glass.

A moment later a face appeared at the window—a female face, distorted with passion. It gave me one look then disappeared.

I stood hesitating how to act. Then the door of the house burst open. A female form flew down the steps and threw itself upon me. Instinct told me that this was the owner of the face.

When I was able to see clearly, I knew that I was right.

The female was large and powerful. I noticed that she addressed me as "Me lord!" But this, I subsequently concluded, was not intended as a mark of respect. From the way she spoke I realized that she, too, was annoyed. She referred to me impartially as "me lord" and "you brute."

I gathered that it was *her* cat I had chased, *her* cat that had leaped in at the open window and smashed the glass case containing the Cupid that had once decorated the summit of her wedding-cake.

LOUDLY lamenting this tragedy, the erstwhile bride addressed herself to a growing crowd.

Not only had the glass case been smashed to smithereens, but Cupid himself had been chipped. He would never be the same again.

Cupid, it appeared, had been the apple of her eye for thirty years.

The crowd respected the sentiment. They respected it none the less because there was a certain poetic license about Cupid as an emblem of the matrimonial bliss of Mrs. Hobbs, in view of the present occupation of Mr. Hobbs. I was given to understand that Mr. Hobbs, having been duly charged with and found guilty of extreme physical violence resulting in grievous bodily injuries to the person of Mrs. Hobbs, was then serving a sentence of hard labor at Wormwood Scrubbs.

Mrs. Hobbs herself touched delicately upon this circumstance in the course of a brief *résumé* of her career with which most of her hearers appeared to be already familiar.

Her misfortune and unblemished character served to emphasize the reprehensible nature of my behavior: The chasing of the innocent cat of the blameless Mrs. Hobbs now stood revealed as an act of unparalleled brutality and callousness. The cat of one who had triumphantly supported herself and the partner of her joys and sorrows for thirty years by taking in mangling and occasionally doing for the ladies of the neighborhood to oblige, such an animal, Mrs. Hobbs pointed out, should have been sacred.

I bowed my head in shame.

Mrs. Hobbs said she would learn me to chase the poor dumb animal.

The crowd murmured approval.

Mrs. Hobbs remarked that some people were no better than Huns.

The crowd cried, "That's right!" and "Shame!"

Mrs. Hobbs said she hoped that some day some people would be trodden on as she had been trodden on.

The crowd hoped so too.

Mrs. Hobbs began to cry. She said this was the crowning sorrow of her life. Nothing would ever make up to her for the chipped Cupid, and the glass case alone had cost a small fortune.

The crowd advised her to have the lawrofim.

Mrs. Hobbs declared between her sobs that she certainly would.

I pointed out to Mrs. Hobbs that I was willing to make good the loss as far as lay in my power.

Mrs. Hobbs instantly became hysterical and dropped Cupid on to the pavement. It broke into three pieces. Mrs. Hobbs gave a shriek and swooned into my arms.

She was a large woman, but my presence of mind did not desert me. I lowered her gently on to her doorstep and called for keys and burnt feathers.

Then it was that I received a remarkable illustration of the truth of the saying, "It's the poor that help the poor."

The poor burned feathers under the nose of Mrs. Hobbs until she was quite black in the face. They put so many door-keys down her back that every inch of her must have been metal-plated.

For a long time Mrs. Hobbs refused to yield to treatment. The burnt feathers made her choke and cough, but she went on swooning, and her eyes remained tightly closed. All efforts to lift her were fruitless. Mrs. Hobbs continued to repose inertly upon her doorstep.

Then some one suggested blood-letting, and Mrs. Hobbs sat up. By the time I had pressed a five-pound note into her hand she had recovered completely.

Amid answers of approval she assured me that she bore me no malice and that, though the loss of the Cupid was, of course, irreparable, she felt sure that I had acted from the best of motives. When all the keys had, with some difficulty, been retrieved, Mrs. Hobbs bade us a comparatively cheerful "good night," and the crowd retired. Blinds that had been hurriedly pulled up were pulled down once more; windows that had been thrown open were closed. Front doors were slammed, bolts shot, keys turned in their locks. The black cat retreated to its doorstep. Quiet reigned once more in Paradise Row.

Then a new sound broke the silence of the night—the sound of lurching footsteps—of some belated reveler returning home. (I have read this somewhere in a book and it fits in beautifully.)

From the manner in which the belated reveler came zigzagging along toward me by the aid of lamp-posts, each of which in turn he seemed reluctant to abandon, it was evident that he was in a condition of abnormal alcoholic excitation, leading to slightly impaired muscular action of the extremities, accompanied by considerable obfuscation of the visual organs. In short, the man was blind drunk.

Deploring his condition, yet not without a certain sympathetic insight, I hurried to his assistance at the moment when, finally abandoning all extraneous support, he slid on to the pavement.

I RAISED him to a sitting position. I interrogated him in the authoritative yet not callous manner befitting to my uniform.

"Come, my man," I said. "Pull yourself together, and tell me where you live."

He muttered something I could not understand.

"Come, come," I remarked more firmly. "I know exactly how you feel. No doubt a policy of masterly inactivity commends itself to your mind at the present moment, in preference to more active measures. But you must make an effort. Try and tell me where you live."

He made the effort.

"Stwenty-stoo," he murmured.

I looked anxiously at the numbers on the nearest houses. Luckily, twenty-two was not far away.

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I hoisted him on to his feet. With some difficulty I supported his wayward steps in the direction of number twenty-two. I propped him up with his back against the door and knocked. Thrice I knocked before the expected footstep came.

At last the door was opened, a dim female shape appeared and silently pulled my reveler in.

I turned away. I congratulated myself upon the neat and useful piece of work I had accomplished. I was arrested by an exclamation indicative of disappointment. Next moment something came hurtling down the steps into the middle of the road. I examined it; it was my friend.

I dragged him painfully back on to the pavement. I seated him with difficulty against a lamp-post. I overhauled him for broken bones.

His attire was disheveled and one eye was assuming rainbow hues. He blinked at me cheerfully with the other, fumbled in his pocket, pulled out a short clay pipe and spoke.

"GOT light — hic — mate? Matches blinkin' dif—hic—dif—hiccult to ob —hic—tain."

I was surprised and a little annoyed.

"How's this, my man?" I inquired, as I helped him to light his pipe. "Why have you come out again? I thought I saw you home."

"Show you did—hic," he replied, with a happy smile, "but I—hic—remember now —I moved las' weekick."

The reply I was about to frame remained unuttered. Somewhere a window opened.

I do not know for whom the missile—it felt like a flower-pot—was intended.

I do not know to whom the request to go and do 'is blinkin' love-makin' somewhere else was addressed. Before I had time to investigate the matter a door on the opposite side of the road was flung open and a youthful female form emerged and rushed upon me with wild cries.

"Constable! Constable! Father's murderin' mother!"

"What!"

"'E's bin sittin' on 'er stummick poundin' 'er 'ead, an' now 'e's runnin' round lookin' for the 'ammer to do 'er in!"

"A hammer! Good heavens!"

"Come along, quick, constable, for Gawd's sake!"

"I will whistle for assistance," I said, pulling violently at my cord. Something had gone wrong. It had caught somewhere. I tugged and pulled. I was unable to get at my whistle.

"Wait one moment, my girl," I murmured, fumbling feverishly.

"Wite one moment!" exclaimed the girl shrilly. "'Wite!' 'e says. It's all right! She's only bein' murdered! 'Wite while I finds me whistle!' You're a bloomin' 'ero, ain't yer?"

"I'm whistling for assistance, my girl," I replied with dignity. "I am merely obeying the regulations. However, as the case appears to be urgent, I will come."

As I followed her, I tried to straighten my disarranged attire.

"I wouldn't 'urry, if I was you!" screamed the girl. "I'd wite and make myself look pretty!"

She led the way into a ground-floor room. There a terrible sight met my eyes.

A gentleman bearing a remarkable resemblance to Cruikshanks's famous portrait of Bill Sykes was sitting upon the prostrate, and apparently lifeless, body of a female which he was belaboring with his fists.

"I'll blinkin' well pitch yer out of the (ensanguined) winder into the (asterisked) street!" he remarked.

Some instinct told me how to act. I realized in a flash that the only way to deal with this kind of situation is to remain calm and collected, to show no violence, to display no temper. In other words, to behave like a gentleman.

I therefore remained standing in the doorway, coughing gently once or twice to attract Bill Sykes's attention.

"DESIST, my man," I remarked as soon as I had succeeded. "Desist, or I shall have to take your name and address."

Bill Sykes surveyed me with great deliberation. Then he rose slowly and advanced toward me.

"You!" he said. "You—yer—yer! You —yer—yer—" Descriptive phraseology did not appear to be in his line. "I'll blinkin' well pitch yer out of the (ensanguined) winder into the (asterisked) street!" he remarked.

"I do not doubt your sincerity," I replied, "but do let us talk this matter over calmly."

The loose change in my pocket jingled musically.

A look of comprehension dawned upon the face of Mr. Sykes.

I drew out a treasury note.

"Far be it from me," I said, absently folding and refolding the note, "far be it from me to grudge any man a little harmless pleasure. I realize that from the very earliest days, as far back as, if not farther than, the neoltihic period, it has been man's privilege to indulge in the innocent pastime of wife-beating. There is, however, a growing tendency on the part of our modern law-makers, rightly or wrongly, to discourage this form of exercise. I am but a humble instrument of the law. While sympathizing with the manly instinct which is prompting you to administer what I have no doubt is well-merited castigation, it is my official duty to persuade you to desist."

So saying, I handed him the treasury note for one pound.

"You seem to be talkin' a lot o' rot," said Mr. Sykes, "but—this is good enough for me."

"Orficer," came a faint voice from the floor. "Orficer!"

The lady had recovered consciousness. She was sitting up, her gaze, slightly impaired by the treatment she had received, fastened upon the note in Mr. Sykes's hand.

Mr. Sykes pocketed the note a little hurriedly.

"Ullo, Sybil!" he remarked. "I see you've woke up!"

"Yes, I've woke up," replied Sybil. "I've woke up, and I'm goin' ter show yer! Orficer, I give that man in charge!"

I gazed at her in consternation.

"Do your duty, orficer," she said, staggering to her feet. "Tike that man into

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custerdy. Can't you see 'e's bin bashin' me about somethink crool?"

"But he is your husband," I reminded her.

"Yis, an' I gives 'im in charge, see?"

"Sybil, my girl, don't you be a crimson fool," said her husband. Then his face changed and he burst into laughing.

I turned to Sybil. *She* was far from laughing. She was rocking herself to and fro as though in pain, clutching her head. Her nose and one side of her face were terribly swollen. One eye was completely closed, while tears were streaming out of the other. There was a bruise upon her neck the size of Bill Sykes's fist.

"Do your duty, constable," she groaned.

I looked irresolutely at her lord.

He grinned.

"Come on, then," he said. "Come and arrest me."

There was something in Mr. Sykes's tone and manner I did not like.

"Look here," I began, and hesitated.

"Constable, do your duty!" cried Mr. Sykes ironically.

I took a step toward him.

"That's right," he said encouragingly. "Come on! Lay 'ands on me, constable, and yer mother won't know yer when I've done with yer!"

I turned to Sybil.

"You are driving this man to desperation," I said.

"Looks like it, don't it?" she retorted carelessly.

"THINK!" I pleaded. "Think before you do anything you may regret. Remember, he is your husband. Remember, before you send him to prison, he is the man you have vowed to love, honor and obey. The man you have taken for better and for worse."

"A damn sight more worse than better," replied Sybil.

"At any rate, he is your husband," I said. "Won't you—can't I persuade you to—forgive him?"

With these words I drew out my notecase. I pushed a note into her hand.

"Come," I murmured, "be generous, forgive."

She folded the note with care, stooped and thrust it into her stocking.

"Safest place when 'e's about," she remarked, nodding toward her husband in an explanatory way. There was not the slightest trace of ill-feeling in her voice. Then, deceived by this sign of magnanimity, I made a slight mistake.

"NOW," I said, smiling kindly at Sybil, "shake hands with him."

"What for?" demanded Sybil.

"To show you're friends."

"We ain't," said Sybil. "We're married."

"To show there's no ill-feeling, then."

"There is." It was Mr. Sykes who spoke this time. "I'm sick of the sight of 'er."

"To look at 'im gives *me* a pain," said Sybil.

"Oh, it does, does it?" cried Mr. Sykes in an awful voice. "All right, then." He advanced threateningly toward his spouse. "For two pins, I'll slosh yer——"

"No, no!" I cried, hastily drawing out another couple of notes. "Here, we won't say any more about it."

"I dunno so much about that," said Mr. Sykes slowly, as he pocketed his note. "I've 'arf a mind to——"

"No, you aren't," Sybil interrupted, stooping once more toward her stocking. "Don't you know a real gentleman when you see one?"

She raised her voice and shouted shrilly:

"Gwendoline! You in bed?"

"No, ma, I ain't!"

The girlish form of Gwendoline appeared in the doorway.

"Light the gentleman to the door, Gwendoline."

"Yes, ma."

The obedient Gwendoline, candle in hand, escorted me to the gate.

I bade her "good night." Gwendoline remained standing with her back to the closed gate, apparently intent on further conversation.

"You 'adn't ought to 'ave let father git orf," she remarked.

"My good girl," I said, "you don't know anything about it."

There was that in Gwendoline's manner that irritated me faintly.

"Don't I? I do, though," she retorted. "I was in the passage all the time. I saw."

"Well, then, you saw how everything has been amicably settled."

"Yes, I saw you settlin'," she replied. "You settled father and mother, but you ain't settled me. It was me what fetched you."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," I said. "An oversight on my part. Allow me . . ."

Left to myself, I reflected that, after all, it was five pounds well spent.

I had saved the authorities unnecessary trouble. Violence, perhaps bloodshed, had been avoided. A gentle answer had indeed turned away wrath.

"Whatever anybody says," I mused happily, "conciliatory methods invariably pay."

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when an ominous familiar sound broke upon the stillness of the night.

NEXT moment there came a deafening crash, succeeded by a blow that seemed to split my ear-drum, and I knew nothing more.

When I recovered consciousness the "All Clear" signal was being sounded.

No one was seriously injured by the bomb that had fallen in Paradise Row. I had been merely stunned by the concussion.

As I was being assisted down the street, a little dazed and shaken, a childish face swam into my line of vision. I recognized it: it belonged to the collector of cigaret-pictures. I discovered that he was being led along the street by an authoritative female who firmly clutched a small reluctant hand.

"Oh, muvver, look!" cried the collector of cigaret-pictures, and he pointed his disengaged arm at me. "Our copper's bin blown up!"

Safe

By David Morton

THE iron, winter twilight deeper falls;
The long road curving where the hills are bare,
Has half-forgot how once these fields were fair,
And once these hills, with green, bird-haunted walls:
The patient cattle, sheltered in their stalls,
Have left brown acres where the stubbles stand,
And nothing moves above the blighted land,
Save a lone blackbird, circling as he calls.

Only the yellow window-lights that glow,
One after one, a warm and mellow square,
To frame brief silhouettes recurring there,
Lift up the grievous pall, since well I know
How Winter fails of all his death and doom,
Where two may pass within a lighted room.

Attendants

By David Morton

THE mild-eyed Oxen and the gentle Ass,
By manger or in pastures that they graze,
Lift their slow heads to watch us where we pass,
A reminiscent wonder in their gaze.
Their low humilty is like a crown,
A grave distinction they have come to wear—
Their look gone past us—to a little Town,
And a sweet miracle that happened there.

An old, old vision haunts those quiet eyes,
Where proud remembrance drifts to them again,
Of Something that has made them humbly wise,
—These burden-bearers for the race of men—
And lightens every load they lift or pull,
Something that chanced because the Inn was full.

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In Red *and* Gold

A Romance of the Greatest River

By Samuel Merwin

Author of "Temperamental Henry," "The Hills of Han," etc.

V

THE STORY SO FAR

ON BOARD a steamer, leaving Shanghai for a voyage up the Yangtze-Kiang, are brought together Dawley Kane, American millionaire, his son, Rocky Kane, a much-spoiled youth; Braker, the financier's secretary, and a Japanese traveling assistant; Miss Andrews, an American girl, and her older companion, Miss Means; three notorious characters of the China Coast, Tex Connor, The Manila Kid—and a girl, Dixie Carmichael. Soon after the start, Connor and the Kid draw young Kane and others into a card game, which the mate of the steamer, Griggsby Doane, quietly breaks up. The Kid then arranges a boxing match between a Chinese "prizefighter" and Doane. It proves to be an occasion for gambling and Doane is compelled to knock out a foul opponent. In the fight Doane's strength and force of personality impress the elder Kane. The Viceroy of Nanking, with his daughter and retinue, is present: he invites Doane to luncheon. Rocky Kane attempts a brutal flirtation with a Chinese girl who he does not know is the daughter of the Viceroy, later sending her an insulting note, which comes to the captain. Doane goes to his cabin to warn him and finds him smoking opium.

At the luncheon with the Viceroy are revealed something of Doane's past and of the Viceroy's unhappy position in the new currents of Chinese life, between the old and the new worlds. At the end he meets the Viceroy's daughter, Hui Fei, who asks to see him later alone. At Kiu Kiang, where the steamer stops, two deserting soldiers of the Viceroy are shot; there are rumors of outbreaks up the river. Dixie Carmichael learns the meaning of all this through young Kane, and tries to get Tex Connor and the Manila Kid to plan a raid on the priceless collection of jewels at the Viceroy's ancestral home. Hui Fei tells Doane her father is returning there to take his life, in obedience to the orders of the tottering Imperial Court. She herself is to be taken to the Court as wife of some imperial favorite.

At a dance on board, an evening later, Rocky Kane, moved by remorse, asks Doane to interpret his apology to the Viceroy and asks Hui Fei for a dance. She politely rebuffs him. Rocky in a fit of depression goes out to smoke opium in Dixie Carmichael's cabin. That night a battle breaks out between the revolutionists and the Viceroy's soldiers on board, and later the steamer is found afire, and is beached. The Viceroy's party is rescued, but a child, the little princess, is accidentally left behind. Rocky Kane, roused from his opium daze by Doane, finds her, and with Doane swims ashore with her. Hui Fei warms to the young man's heroism.

Her father thanks Doane, who improves the occasion by offering to help the Viceroy to escape the fate that awaits him. The Viceroy is moved by this evide ice of friendliness but is resigned to the Imperial edict. He invites Doane to accompany him home. Doane prevails upon Dawley Kane to bid for the Viceroy's collections of jewels and art treasures, but declines to become Kane's agent when the millionaire suggests that a better bargain can be made with the emissary from Peking who is on the way to confiscate the Viceroy's possessions. Meanwhile, young Rocky Kane, stranded on the beach with Hui Fei and the child princess, declares his love for the Chinese girl, and confesses that his opium lamp had started the fire on board the steamer. An English gunboat comes to the rescue of the white folks. On their way out to the boat in a tender, Rocky learns from his father of the impending danger to the Viceroy's family and swims ashore to protect Hui Fei.

Dixie Carmichael, Tex Connor and the Manila Kid, who fled the fire in the same small boat, reach a Chinese junk, which they immediately press into service and direct toward Huang Chow, bent on plundering the Viceroy's estate. At the instance of Dixie, the Kid attempts to kill Connor and instead meets death himself. When the junk arrives, Connor brutally orders Dixie to remain on board. She disobeys his orders and follows him ashore.

Chapter Nine

In a Garden

I

THE road—narrow, worn to a deep-rutted little cañon—circled a brown hill, rose into a mud-gray village, where a few listless children played among the dogs and a few apathetic beggars and vendors of cakes and wrinkled old women stared at the thin white girl who walked rapidly and alone; wound on below the surface of the cultivated fields; came at length to a wall of mud-bricks crowned with tiles of yellow glaze and a ridge-piece of green, and at last to a gate-house with a heavily ornamented roof of timbers and tiles. Other roofs appeared just beyond, and interlacing foliage that was tinged here and there with the red and yellow and bronze of autumn.

The great gates, of heavy plank studded with iron spikes, stood open, apparently unattended. Dixie Carmichael paused; pursed her lips. Her coolly searching eyes noted an incandescent-light bulb set in the massive lintel. This, perhaps, would be the place. Almost absently, peering through into tiled courtyards, she took two of the corrosive-sublimate tablets from her pocket; then, holding them in her hand, stepped within, and stood listening. The rustling of the leaves she heard, as they swayed in a pleasant breeze, and a softly musical tinkling sound; then a murmur that might be voices at a distance and in some confusion; and then, sharply, with an unearthly thrill, the silver scream of a girl. Yes, this would be the place.

The buildings on either hand were silent. Doors stood open. Paper windows were torn here and there and the woodwork broken in. But the flowers and the dwarf trees from Japan that stood in jars of Ming pottery were undisturbed.

She passed through an inner gate and around a screen of brick and found herself in a park. There was a waterfall in a rockery, and a stream, and a tiny lake. A path led over a series of little arching bridges of marble into the grove beyond; and through the trees there she caught glimpses of elaborate yellow roofs. On either hand stood pai-lows—decorative arches in the pretentious Chinese manner—and beyond each a roofed pavilion built over a bridge.

She considered these; after a moment sauntered under the pai-low at her right, mounted the steps and dropped on the ornamented seat behind a leafy vine. Here she was sheltered from view, yet her eyes commanded both the main gate and the way over the marble bridges to the buildings in the grove.

She looked about with a sense of quiet pleasure at the gilded fretwork beneath the curving eaves of the pavilion, the painted scrolls above them, and the smooth round columns of aged nanmu wood that was in color like dead oak leaves and that still exhaled a vague perfume. The tinkling sound set up again as another breeze wandered by; and looking up she saw four small bells of bronze suspended from the eaves. She sat very still, listening, looking, thinking, drawing in with a deep inhalation the exquisite fragrance of the nanmu wood. It might be pleasant, one day, to lease or even buy a home like this. So ran her alert thoughts.

The murmuring sound from the buildings in the grove continued, now swelling a little, now subsiding. It was not, of itself, an alarming sound, excepting for an occasional muffled shot. Her quick imagination, however, pictured the scene—they would be running about, calling to one another, beating in doors, rummaging everywhere. The drunkenness would doubtless be already under way. There would be much casual but ingenious cruelty, an orgiastic indulgence in every uttermost thrill of sense. It would be interesting to see; she even considered, her nerves tightening slightly at the thought, strolling back there over the bridges; but held finally to her first impulse and continued waiting here.

A considerable time passed; half an hour or more. Then she glimpsed figures approaching slowly through the grove. They emerged on the farthest of the marble bridges. One was Tex Connor; the second perhaps—certainly—Tom Sung. They carried armfuls of small boxes, at the sight of which Dixie's pulse again quickened slightly; for these would be the jewels. Tom appeared to be talking freely; as they crossed the middle bridge he broke into song; and he reeled jovially. Connor walked firmly on ahead.

They stopped by the gate screen. Connor glanced cautiously about; then moved aside into a tiled area that was hidden from the gate and the path by quince bushes. He called to Tom, who followed.

Miss Carmichael could look almost directly down at them through the leaves. She watched closely as they hurriedly opened the boxes and filled their pockets with the gems. Tom used a stone to break the golden settings of the larger diamonds, pearls and rubies.

A low-voiced argument followed. She heard Tom say: "I come back, all light. But I got have a girl!" And he lurched away.

Connor, looking angrily after him, reached back to his hip pocket; but reconsidered. He needed Tom, if only as interpreter; and Tom, singing unmusically as

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She sat on the floor; leaned wearily against the rail. He seated himself in a corner.

he reeled away over the marble bridges, knew it.

II

CONNOR waited, standing irresolute, listening, turning his eye toward the gate, then toward the trees behind him. The girl in the pavilion considered him. She had not before observed evidence of fear in the man. But then she had never before seen him in a situation that tested his brain and nerve as well as his animal courage. He was at heart a bully, of course; and she knew that bullies were cowards. What small respect she had at moments felt for Tex left her now. She came down to despising him, as she despised nearly all other men of her acquaintance. Still peering through the leaves, she saw him move a little way toward the gate, then glance, with a start, toward the marble bridges, finally turning back to the remaining boxes.

He opened one of these—it was of yellow lacquer richly ornamented—and drew out what appeared to be a tangle of strings of pearls. He turned it over in his hands; spread it out; felt his pockets; finally unbuttoned his shirt and thrust it in there.

It was at this point that Dixie arose, replaced the poison tablets in her pocket, smoothed her skirt, and went lightly down the steps. He did not hear her until she spoke.

"Do you think Tom'll come back, Tex?"

He whirled so clumsily that he nearly fell among the boxes and the broken and trampled bits of gold and silver; fixed his good eye on her, while the other gazed vacantly over her shoulder.

She coolly studied him—the flushed face, bulging pockets, protruding shirt where he had stuffed in those astonishing ropes of pearls.

He said then, vaguely:

"What are you doing here?"

"Thought I'd come along. Suppose he stays back there—drinks some more. You'd be sort of up against it, wouldn't you?"

"I'd be no worse off than you." He was evasive, and more than a little sullen. She saw that he was foolishly trying to keep his broad person between her and the boxes.

"You couldn't handle the junk without Tom. Not very well. Look here, Tex, it can't be more than ten or twelve miles to the Concessions at Hankow. We could pick up a cart, or even walk it."

"What good would that do?"

"There'll be steamers down to Shanghai."

"And there'll be police to drag us off."

"How can they? What can they pin on you?"

Connor's eye wavered back toward the grove and the buildings. She realized now that he was breathing hard. "After all this"—he muttered. "That old Viceroy'll be up here, you know. With his mob, too. And there's plenty of people here to tell." He was trying now to hold an arm across his middle in a position that would conceal the treasure there.

Her glance followed the motion, and for a moment a faintly mocking smile hovered about her thin mouth. She said:

"Saving those pearls for me, Tex?"

He stared at her, fixed her with that one small eye, but offered not a word.

A moment later, however, nervously signaling her to be still, he brushed by and peeped out around the quinces.

"What is it?" she asked quickly; then moved to his side.

III

IMMEDIATELY beyond the farthest of the marble bridges stood a group of ten or twelve soldiers in drunkenly earnest argument. Above them towered the powerful shoulders and small round head of Tom Sung. In the one quick glance she caught an impression of rifles slung across sturdy backs, of bayonets that seemed, at that distance, oddly dark, in color; an impression, too, of confused minds and a growing primitive instinct for violence. Tom and another swayed toward the bridge; others drew them back and pointed toward the buildings they had left. The argument waxed. Voices were shrilly emphatic.

"Looks bad," said the girl, at Connor's shoulder. "You've let 'em get out of hand, Tex." Then, as she saw him nervously measuring with his eye the width of the open space between the quinces and the gate screen, she added: "Thinking of making a run for it, Tex?"

He slowly swung that eye on her now; and for no reason pushed her roughly

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"It's none of your business what I'm going to do," he replied roughly.

But the voice was husky and curiously light in quality. And the eye wavered away from her intent look. This creature fell far short of the Tex Connor of old. She spoke sharply:

"Come up into this summer house, Tex!" She indicated it with an upward jerk of her head. "They won't see us there, at first. You didn't see me. You've got your pistols. You can give me one. We ought to be able to stand off a few Chinese drunks."

She could see that he was fumbling about for courage, for a plan, in a mind that had broken down utterly. His growl of "I'm not giving you any pistol!" was the flimsiest of cover. And so she left him, choosing a moment when that loud argument beyond the bridges was at its height to run lightly up the steps and into the pavilion.

From this point she looked down on the thick-minded Connor as he struggled between cupidity, fear and the bluffing pride that was so deep a strain in the man. The one certain fact was that he couldn't purposelessly wait there, with Tom Sung leading these outlawed soldiers to a deed he feared to undertake alone. They were coming over the bridges now, Tom in the lead, lurching along and brandishing his revolver, the others unslinging their rifles. The argument had ceased; they were ominously quiet.

Dixie got her tablets out again; then sat waiting, that faint mocking smile again touching the corners of her mouth. But the smile now meant an excitement bordering on the thrill she had lately envied the savage folk in the grove. Such a thrill had moved those cold-eyed women who sat above the combat of gladiators in the Colosseum and with thumbs down awaited the death agony of a fallen warrior. It had been respectable then; now it was the perverse pleasure of a solitary social outcast. But to this girl who could be moved by no simple pleasures it came as a gratifying substitute for happiness. Her own danger but added a sharp edge to the exquisite sensation. It was the ultimate gamble, in a life in which only gambling mattered.

Connor was fumbling in utter confusion, first at a hip pocket where a pistol bulged, then at a side pocket that bulged with precious stones. His eye darted this way and that. His cheeks had changed in color to a pasty gray. The girl thought for a moment that he had actually gone out of his head.

HIS action, when it finally came, was grotesquely romantic. She thought, in a flash, of the adventure novels she had so often seen him reading. It was to her absurd; even wildly comic. For with those bulging pockets and that gray face, a criminal run to earth by his cruder confederates, he fell back on dignity.

He strode directly out into the path, with a sort of mock firmness, and, like a policeman on a busy corner, raised his hand.

Even at that he might have impressed the soldiers, for he was white, and had been their vital and vigorous leader, and they were yellow and low-bred and drunk. As it was, they actually stopped, just over the nearest bridge; gave the odd appearance of huddling uncertainly there. But Connor could not hold the pose. He broke; looked wildly about; started, puffing like a spent runner up the steps of the pavilion where the girl, leaning slightly forward, drawing in her breath sharply through parted lips, looked through the leaves.

Several of the rifles cracked then; she heard the bullets sing by. And Connor fell forward on the steps, clawed at them for a moment, and lay still in a slowly widening pool of thick blood. He had not so much as drawn a weapon. Tex Connor was gone.

IV

THEY came on, laughing, with a good deal of rough banter, and gathered up the jewels. Tom and another mounted the steps to the body and went through the pockets of his trousers for the jewels that were there and the pistols. As there was no coat, they did not look further. And then merrily they went back over the marble bridges to the buildings in the grove where were still, perhaps, liquor and women.

When the last of their shouts had died out, when, laying her head against the fragrant wood, she could hear again the musical tinkling of the bronze bells and the pleasant murmuring of the tiny waterfall and the sighing of the leaves, Dixie slipped down to the body, fastidiously avoiding the blood. It was heavy; she exerted all her wiry strength in rolling it partly over. Then, drawing out the curious net of pearls, she let the body roll back.

Again in her sheltered seat she spread on her lap the amazing garment; for a garment of some sort it appeared to be. There was even a row of golden clasps set with very large diamonds. At a rough estimate she decided that there were all of three thousand to four thousand perfect pearls in the numerous strings. Turning and twisting it about, she hit on the notion of drawing it about her shoulders and found that it settled there like a cape. It was, indeed, just that—a cape of pearls. She did not know that it was the only garment of its precise sort in the world, that it had passed from one royal person to another until, after the death of "the Old Buddha" in 1908, it fell into the hands of his Excellency T'ang Chi T'ung.

She took it off; stood erect; pulled out her loosely hanging middy blouse; and, twisting the strings into a rope, fastened it about her waist, rearranging the blouse over it. The concealment was perfect.

She sat again, then, to think out the next step. Returning to the junk was out of the question. It would be better to get somehow up to the Concessions and trust to her wits to explain her presence there. For Tex had been shrewd enough about that. The Concessions were a small bit of earth with but one or two possible hotels, full of white folk and fuller of gossip. She had had her little difficulties, with the consuls, as with the rough-riding American judge who took his itinerant court from post to post announcing firmly that he purposed ridding the East of such "American girls" as she. Dawley Kane would surely be there, and other survivors of the fire. It all meant picking up a passage down the river at the earliest possible moment; and running grave chances at that. But her strength lay in her impregnable self-confidence. She feared herself least of all.

Another problem was the getting to the Concessions. It was not the best of times for a girl to walk the highway alone. To be sure, she had come safely through from the junk; but it had not been far, and she hadn't had to approach a native army. She decided to wait an hour or so, until the plunderers there in the grove should be fully drunk; then, if at the moment it seemed the thing, to slip out and make a try for it.

And then, a little later, evidently from the road outside the wall, came a new sort of confused sounds; music, of flageolets and strings and falsetto voices, and with it a low-pitched babel of many tongues. Whoever these new folk might be, they appeared to be turning in at the open gate. The music stopped abruptly in a low whine of discord, and the talk rose in pitch. Over the brick screen appeared banners moving jerkily about, dipping and rising, as if in the hands of agitated persons below; a black banner, bearing in its center the triple imperial emblems of the sun, the other two yellow, one blazoning the familiar dragon, the other a phenix.

A few banner men appeared peeping cautiously about the screen; Manchu soldiers of the old effete army, bearing short rifles. They came on cautiously into the park, joined in a moment by others. An officer with a cue and an old-fashioned sword and a military cap in place of a turban followed, and forming them into a ragged column of fours marched them over the marble bridges and into the grove, where they disappeared from view.

Then a gorgeously colored sedan chair came swaying in, carried by many bearers walking under stout bamboo cross-poles. Others, in the more elaborate dress of officials, walked beside and behind it. Then came more soldiers, who straggled informally about, some even dropping on the gravel to rest their evidently weary bodies.

THE chair was opened in front and a tall fat man stepped rather pompously out, wearing a robe of rose and blue and the brightly embroidered insignia and cap button of a mandarin of the fourth rank. At once a servant came forward with a huge umbrella (not unlike the sort often seen on European bathing-beaches), which he opened and held over the fat man. And then they waited, all of them, standing or lying about and talking in excited groups. Several of the officials hurried back around the screen as if to examine the deserted apartments just within the gate, and shortly returned with much to say in their musical singsong. An officer suddenly espied the body of Connor lying on the steps of the pavilion and came, with others, excitedly to the foot of the steps. The key of the confused talk rose at once. There was an excited conference of many ranks about the tall fat man under the umbrella.

Then came from the grove that same sound of muffled shots, followed by a breathless pause. More shots then, and great excitement here by the screen. A number of the soldiers who had crossed the bridges appeared, running. The man in the lead had lost turban and rifle. As he drew near blood could be seen on his face. And now abruptly the officials and the ragtag and bobtail by the screen—polebearers, lictors, runners, soldiers—lost their heads. Some ran this way and that, even into the bushes, only to reappear and

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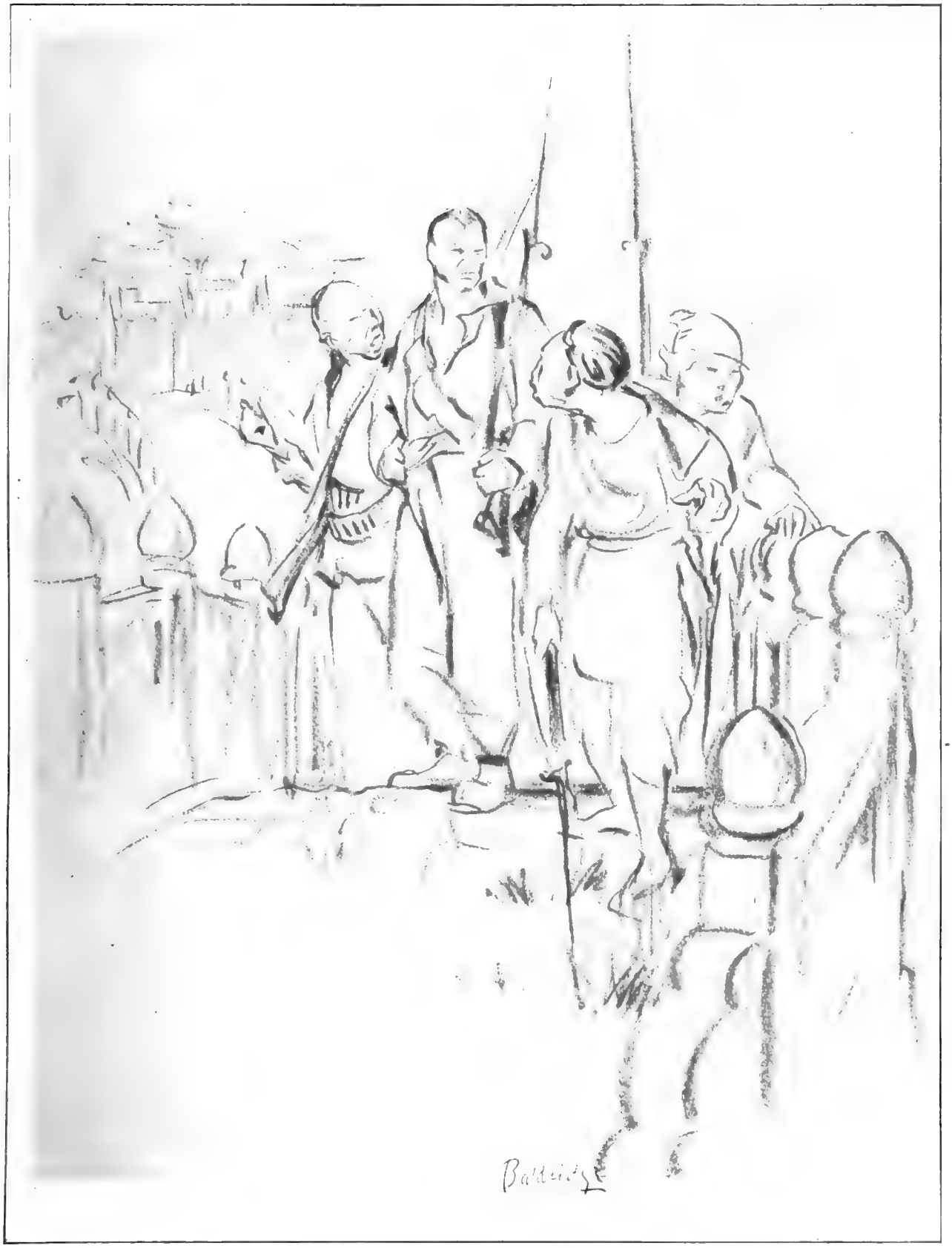

They were coming over the bridge now, Tom Sung in the lead, lurching along and brandishing his revolver, the others unslinging their rifles.

follow their clearer-headed brethren out to the gate. The umbrella-bearer dropped his burden and vanished. The fugitives from the grove were among the panic-stricken group now, racing with them for the gate and the highway without; scurrying around the end of the screen like frightened rabbits and in pursuit, cheering and yelling, came many of the soldiers from the junk, some reeling, but all delighted at the thought of further slaughter.

They caught the tall fat mandarin as he was waddling around the screen, wounded by a chance shot; leaped upon him, bringing him down screaming with fear; beat and kicked him; with their knives and bayonets performing subtle acts of torture which gave them evident pleasure and of which the coldly observant Dixie Carmichael lost no detail. When the fat body lay inert, not before, they took the sword of a fallen officer and cut off the head, hacking clumsily. The head they placed on a pole, marching noisily about with it, finally

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setting it up beside the first of the marble bridges. Then at last they wandered back into the grove and left the grisly object on the pole to dominate obscenely the garden they had profaned.

Dixie leaned against the smooth, sweet surface of the nanmu wood and listened again to the pleasantly soft sounds of waterfall and moving leaves and little bronze bells. Her face was chalk-white; her thin hands lay limp in her lap; she knew, with an abrupt sensation of sinking, that she was profoundly tired. But in her brain burned still a cold-white flame of excitement. Life, her instinct as the veriest child had informed her, was anything, everything, but the simple copybook-pattern expounded by the naïve folk of America and England. Life, as she critically saw it, was a complex of primitive impulses tempered by greeds, dreams and amazing subtleties. It was blindly possessive, carelessly repellant, creative and destructive in a breath, at once warm and cold, kindly and savage, impersonally heedless of the helpless human creatures that drifted hither and yon before the winds of chance. Cunning, in the world she saw about her, won always farther than virtue, and often farther than force.

She could not take her eyes during a long period of time from the hideous object on the pole. Her overstimulated thoughts were reaching quickly, sharply, far in every direction. The feeling came, grew into belief, that she was mysteriously out of her danger. She felt the ropes of pearls under her blouse with an ecstatic little catch of the breath; and finally letting her eyes drop to that other ugly object on the steps beneath her, slowly opened her bag, drew out the bracelet watch (that the Manila Kid had given her out of an absurd hope) and fastened it about her wrist. And her eyes were bright with triumph.

Chapter Ten

Youth

I

THERE came for His Excellency, as the sun mounted the sky, a large junk of his own river fleet—great brown sails flapping against the five masts of all heights that pointed up at crazily various angles, pennons flying at each masthead, hull weathered darkly, mats and fenders of woven hemp hung over the poop-rail, and a swarming pigtailed crew at the sweeps and overside on the sponson and hard at the tracking ropes as the tai-kung screamed from the bow and the lao-pan shouted from the poop.

They were ferried aboard in the small boat, T'ang with his daughters and his suite and servants, a handful of pitifully wailing women, young Kane and Griggsby Doane. Then the trackers cast off from the shore and the mooring poles, the sweeps moved, and with the lao-pan musically calling the stroke the junk moved laboriously up-stream toward the home of His Excellency's ancestors.

Crowded into the uninviting cabins the weary travelers sought a few hours of rest. Even the servants and the mourning women, under the mattings forward, fell swiftly asleep. Only Rocky Kane, his eyes staring widely out of a sensitively white face, walked the deck; until the thought—a new sort of thought in the life of this headstrong youth—that he would be disturbing those below drove him aft, out beyond the steersman to the overhanging gallery. Here he sat on the rail and gazed moodily down at the tireless, mighty river flowing off astern.

He wheeled so clumsily that he nearly fell among the boxes and the broken and trampled bits of gold and silver.

The good in the boy—made up of the intelligence, the deep-smoldering conscience, the fineness that were woven out of his confused heritage into his fiber—was rising now like a tide in his spirit; and the experience was intensely painful. It seemed to his undisciplined mind that he was, in certain of his aspects, an incredible monster. There had been wild acts back home, a crazy instinct for excess that now took on distinctness of outline; moments of careless evil in Japan and Shanghai; the continuous subtle conflict with his father in which any evasion had seemed fair; but above all these vivid memory-screens that raced like an uncontrollably swift panorama through his over-alert brain stood out his vicious conduct on the ship.

It was impossible at this moment to realize mentally that the Princess Hui Fei was now his friend; he could see her only in the bright Manchu costume as she had appeared when he first so uncouthly spoke to her. And there were, too, the ugly moments with the strange girl known as Dixie Carmichael. That part of it was only a nightmare now. He was overtired. The racing in his brain frightened him more than a little. He stared at the dimpling yellow river, at a fishing boat, and finally lifted his hurt eyes to the bright sky. He had been going straight to hell, he told himself, mumbling the words softly aloud. And then this lovely girl had brought him into confusion and humility. Suddenly he had broken with his father; that, in itself, seemed curiously unaccountable, yet there the fact stood.

Life—eager, crowding—had rushed him off his feet. He felt wildly adrift, carried on currents that he could not stem. He was, indeed, passing through one of life's deepest experiences, one known to the somewhat unimaginative and intolerant people whose blood ran in his veins as conviction of sin. His own careless life had overtaken and confronted him. It had to be a bitter moment. There was even terror in it. And there was no escaping; it had to be lived through.

A merry voice called; there was the patter of soft-clad feet, and in a moment the little princess in her yellow hood with the fox head on the crown was climbing into his lap. Eagerly, tenderly, he lifted her; cuddled her close and kissed her soft cheek. Tears were frankly in his eyes now.

He laughed with her, nervously at first, then, in the quick responsiveness of youth, with good humor. She came to him as health. Together they watched the diving cormorants and the wading buffalo. Then he hunted about until he found a bit of board and a ball of twine; whittled the board into a flat boat, stuck a little mast in it with a white sail made from a letter from his pocket, and towed it astern. Together they hung on the rail, watching the craft as it bobbed over the little waves and laughing when it capsized and lost its sail.

She climbed into his lap again after that, and scolded him for making the unintelligible English sounds, and made signs for him to smoke; and he showed her his water-soaked cigarets.

II

AT A low-pitched exclamation he turned with a nervous start. The tall eunuch stood on the cabin roof; came quickly forward for the child. And beside him was Miss Hui Fei, still of course wearing the Chinese coat and trousers in which she had escaped from the steamer. She had, under the warm sun, thrown aside the curiously modern opera wrap. She was slim, young, delicately feminine. The boy gazed at her reverently. She seemed to him a fairy, an unearthly creature, worlds beyond his reach. In his excitement, but a few hours back—in what he had supposed to be their last moment together, in what, indeed, had seemed the end of the world—he had declared his love for her. That had been an uprush of pure emotion. He recalled it now, yet found it difficult to accept as an occurrence. The actual world had turned unreal to him, as it does to the inexperienced and sensitive young that suffer poignantly.

To this grave young woman, oddly, his shipmate, he could hardly, he felt now, have spoken a personal word. Their acquaintance had begun at a high emotional pitch; now it must begin again, normally. So it seemed to him.

"We were looking for my li'l sister," she explained, and half turned. The eunuch had already disappeared with the child.

"Won't you sit out here—with me?" He spoke hesitantly. "That is, unless you are too tired to visit."

"I coul'n't sleep," said she.

Slowly she came out on the gallery.

"There aren't any chairs," said he. "Perhaps I could find——"

"I don' mind." She sat on the floor; leaned wearily against the rail. He settled himself in a corner.

"I couldn't sleep either. You see—Miss Hui—Miss Fei"—he broke into a chuckle of embarrassment—"honest, I don't know what to call you."

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The unexpected touch of boyish good humor moved her nearly to a smile. Boyish he was, sitting with his feet curled up, stabbing at the deck with his jack-knife, coatless, collarless, his thick hair tousled, blushing pleasantly.

"My frien's call me Hui," she replied simply.

"Oh—really! May I? If you would—of course I know that—but my friends call me Rocky. The whole thing is Rockingham Bruce Kane. But——"

"I'll call you Misser Kane," said she.

His face fell a very little; but quickly he recovered himself.

"You must have wondered—I suppose it seems as if I've done a rather crazy thing—it *must* seem so——

She murmured, "Oh, no!"

"Attaching myself to your party this way—at such a difficult time. I know it was a pretty impulsive thing to do, but——"

His voice trailed into silence. The fact was he had done it because he couldn't help it. For a brief moment this wild act seemed, however different in its significance to himself, of a piece with his other wild acts. It was, perhaps, like all those, just ungoverned egotism. Her voice broke sweetly in on this moment of gloomy reverie.

"We know tha' you would help us if you coul'. An' you were so won'erful."

"If I only could help! You see when I spoke that way to you—I mean telling you I loved you——"

"Please! We won't talk abou' tha'."

"No. We won't. Except just this. I was beside myself. But even then, or pretty soon afterward, I knew it was just plain selfishness."

"You musn' say that, either. Please!"

"No—just this! Of course you don't know me. What you do know is all against me——"

"I have forgotten——"

"You will never forget. But even if you were some day to like me more than you could now, I know it would take a long time. I've got to earn the right to be really your friend first. I'm going to try to do that. I've started all over—today—my life, I mean. I'm just simply beginning again. There's a good long scrap ahead of me. That's all about that! But please believe that I've got a little sanity in me."

"Oh, I'm sure——"

"I HAVE. Jumping overboard like that, and swimming back to you—it wasn't just crazy impulse, like so many of the things I've done. You see, my father knows you and your father—yes, I mean the terrible trouble you're in. Oh, everything comes to him, sooner or later. All the facts. You have to figure on that, with the pater. He—well, he wanted me to stop thinking about you. He was afraid I'd be writing to you, or something. You see, he'd watched us talking there by the fire. And he told me about this—this dreadful thing. And then I had to come back. Don't you see? I couldn't go on, leaving you like this. Of course, it's likely enough I'm just in the way here——"

She was smiling wearily, pathetically, now.

"Oh, no—" she began.

"It's this way," he swept impetuously on. "Maybe I *can* help. Anyway, I've got to try. If your father—really—" He saw the slight shudder that passed through her slender body, and abruptly checked the rapid flow of words. "We've got to take care of you," he said, with surprising gravity and kindness. "You'll have to get back with the white people. You mustn't be left with the yellow."

"I know," said she, the strength nearly gone from her voice. "It always seems to me that I'm an American. Though sometimes I ge' confuse'. It isn' easy to think."

"I'm simply wearing you out. I mustn't. But just this—remember that I know all about it. I've broken with my father for the present, and I'm happy about that. I have got some money of my own—quite a little. I've even got a wet letter of credit in my pocket. I had just sense enough last night to get it out of my coat. It's no good, of course, outside of the Treaty Ports, but it's there. I'm here to help. And I do want to feel that you'll call on me—for anything—and as for the rest of it——"

He had thought himself unusually clear and cool, but at this point his voice clouded and broke. He glanced timidly at her, and saw that her eyes were full of tears. He had to look away then. And during a long few moments they sat without a word.

Then the thought came—"I'm here to help!" It was a stirring thought. He had never helped, never in his life that he could remember. And yet the Kanes did things; they were strong men.

He was moodily skipping his knife over his hand, trying to catch the point in the soft wood. Abruptly, with a surprising, boyish smile, he looked up and asked—

"Ever play mumble-the-peg?"

Her troubled eyes for an instant met his. He chuckled again in that boyish way. And she, nervously, chuckled too. That seemed good.

"It's sort of hard to make the blade stick in this wood," he said eagerly. "But we can do some of the things."

Griggsby Doane, too, was far from sleep. For that matter, he was of the strong, mature sort that needs little, that can work long hours and endure severe strain without weakening. Moving aft over the poop he saw them, playing like two children, and stepped quietly behind the slanting short mast that overhung the steersman.

III

THEY made a charming picture, laughing softly as they tossed the knife. It hadn't before occurred to him that young Kane had charm. Plainly, now, he had. And it was good for Hui Fei, in this hour of tragic suspense. Youth, of course, would call unto youth. That was the natural thing. He tried to force himself to see it in that light, but he went forward with a heavy heart.

The junk moved deliberately against the current. The monotonous voice of the chanting lao-pan, the rhythmical splash and creak of the sweeps, the syncopated continuous song of the crowded oarsman, an occasional warning cry from the tai-kung—these were the only sounds. Elsewhere, lying in groups about the deck, the castaways slumbered.

But Doane knew that his Excellency was awake, shut away in the lao-pan's

At a rough estimate she decided that there were all of three thousand to four thousand perfect pearls in the numerous strings.

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cabin, for repeatedly he had heard him moving about. Once, through a thin partition, had come the sound of a chair scraping. It would mean that T'ang was preparing his final papers. These would be completely done. There would be memorials to the throne and to his children and friends, couched in the language of a master of the classics, rich in the literary allusions dear to the heart of the scholar, Manchu and Chinese alike.

Doane found a seat on a coil of the heavy tracking rope. His own part in the drama through which they were all so strangely living could be only passive. He would serve as he might. His little dream of personal happiness, with a woman to love and new strong work to be somehow begun, was wholly gone.

Slowly, foot by foot, the clumsy craft crept up the river. And, strangely, the scene held its peaceful, intensely busy character. Everywhere, as if there were no revolution, as if the old river had never known wreckage and bloodshed, the country folk toiled in the fields. Junks passed. Irrigating wheels turned endlessly. Fishermen sat patiently watching their cormorants or lowering and lifting their nets. A big English steamer came booming down, with white passengers, out of bloody Hankow (the looting and burning of the native city must have been going on just then, before the reinforced imperial troops drove the republicans back across the river). They lay about in deck chairs, these white passengers; or, doubtless, played bridge in the smoking-room. And Doane, as so often during his long life, felt his thoughts turning from these idle, self-important whites, back to the oldest of living peoples; and he dwelt on their incalculable energy, their incredible numbers, their ceaseless individual struggle with the land and water that kept them barely, at best, above the line of mere sustenance.

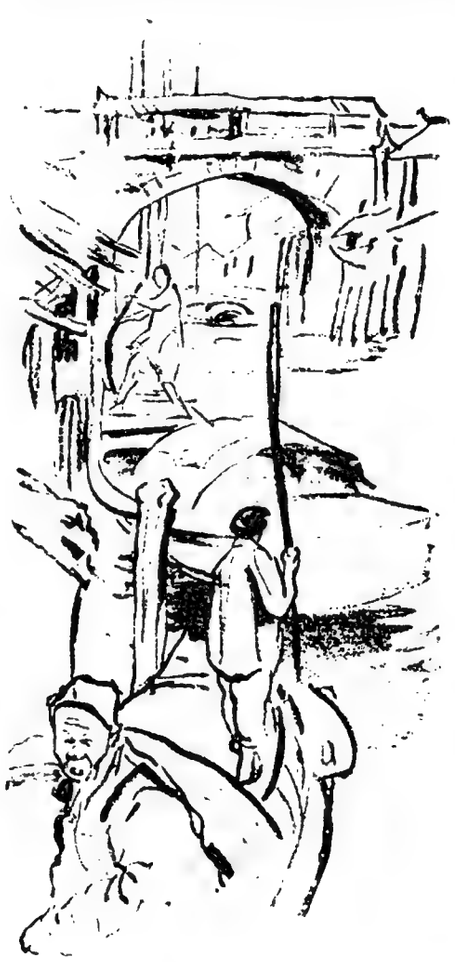
IT WAS difficult, pondering all this, to believe that any revolution could deeply stir this vast preoccupied people, submerged as they appeared to be in ancient habit. The revolution could succeed only if the Manchu government was ready to fall apart from the weakness of sheer decadence. It was nothing, this revolution, but the desperate work of agitators who had glimpsed the freedom and wealth of the West. And the hot-blooded Cantonese, of course. Most of the Chinese in America were Cantonese. The revolution was, then, a southern matter; it was these tropical men that had come to know America. That was about its only strength. The great mass of yellow folk here in the Yangtze Valley, and through the coast provinces, and all over the great central plain and the north and northwest were peaceable at heart; only those southerners were truculent, they and scattered handfuls of students.

And yet China, in the hopeful hearts of those who knew and loved the old traditions, must somehow be modernized. Sooner or later the Manchu would fall. The vast patient multitude must then either learn to think for themselves in terms of modern, large-scale organization or fall into deeper degradation. The European trading nations would strike deep and hard in a sordid struggle for the remaining native wealth. The Japanese, with iron policy and intriguing hand, would destroy their institutions and bring them into a pitiful slavery, economic and military.

His own life, Doane reflected, must be spent in some way to help this great people. The individual, confronted by so vast a problem, seemed nothing. But the effort had to be made. Since he was not a trader, since he could not hope now to find himself in step with the white generation that had passed him by, all that was left was to pitch in out here. The call of the martyred Sun Shi-pi pointed a way.

The personal difficulty only remained. The man who loses step with his own people and his own time must submit to being rolled under and trampled on. There is no other form of loneliness so deep or so bitter. And seeing nothing above and about him but the hard under side of this hard white civilization, the unfortunate one can not hope to retain in full vigor the incentive to effort that is the magic of the creative white race. Every circumstance now seemed combined to hold him down and under. The philosophy of the East with which his spirit was saturated argued for contemplation, submission, negation (as did, for that matter, the gospel of that oriental Jesus to whose life the people that called themselves Christian, in their every activity, every day, gave the lie). His only driving power, then, must come out of the white spark that was, after all, in his blood. It was only as a discordantly active white that he could help the yellow men he loved. And the one great incentive—love, companionship, for which his strong heart hungered—had flickered before him only to die out. He must somehow, at that, prove worthy. It was to be just one more great effort in a life of prodigiously wasted effort. He thought, as he had thought before in bitter hours, of Gethsemane. But he knew, now, that he purposed going on. Once again he was to dedicate his vigor to a cause; but this time without the hope of youth and without love walking at his side.

And then, quaintly, alluringly, the picture of Hui Fei took form before his mind's eye, as if to mock his laborious philosophy, charm it away. Like that of a boy his quick imagination wove about her bright youth, her piquant new-old worldliness, shining veils of illusion. It was, then, to be so. He was to live on, sadly, with a dream that would not die. He bowed his head.



Slowly, foot by foot, the clumsy craft crept up the river. And, strangely, the scene held its peaceful, intensely busy character.

IV

THEIR play brought relief to the overwrought nerves of the two young people. After a time they settled comfortably against the rail.

"You lost all your things on the steamer?" said he.

"Everything."

"So did I." He smiled ruefully. "Even part of my clothes. But it doesn't matter."

"I di'n' like to lose all my pretty things," said she. "But they're gone now. All excep' my opera cloak. An' I'm jus' a Manchu girl again. It's so strange—only yes'erday it seem to me I was a real American. I los' my books, too—all my books."

He glanced up quickly.

"You're fond of reading?"

"Oh yes! Aren' you?"

"Why—no, I haven't been. The fellows and girls I've known didn't read much."

"Tha' seems funny. When you have so much. And it's so easy to read English. Chinese is ver' hard."

"What books have you read mostly."

She smiled. "Oh, I coul'n' say. So many! I've read the classics, of course—Shakespeare an' Milton and Chaucer. Chaucer is so modern—don' you think? I mean the way he makes pictures with words."

"What would you think," said he, "if I confessed that I cut all those old fellows at school and college?"

"I've thought often," said she, gravely, "tha' you Americans are spoil' because you have much. So much of everything."

"Perhaps; I don't know. The fellows feel that those things don't help much in later life."

"Oh, bu' they *do!* You mus' have a knowledge of literature an' philosophy. Wha' do they go to college for?"

"Well—" Inwardly, he winced. He felt himself, without resentment, without the faintest desire to defend the life he had known, at a disadvantage. "To tell the truth, I suppose we go partly for a good time. It puts off going into business four years, you know, and once you start business you've got to get down to it. Then there's all the athletics, and the friends you make. Of course, most of the fellows realize that if they make the right kind of friendships it'll help, later, in the big game."

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"You mean with the sons of other rich men?" she asked.

"Why, no, not—yes, come to think of it, I suppose that's just what I do mean. Do you know here with you, it doesn't look like much of a picture—does it?"

Thoughtfully she moved her head in the negative.

"I know a goo' deal about it," said she. "I've watch' the college men in America. Some of them, I think, are pretty foolish."

"I suppose we are," said he, glumly. "But would you have a fellow just go in for digging?"

She inclined her head. "I woul'. It is a grea' privilege to have years for study."

He was flushing. "But you're not a dig! You—you dance, you know about things, you can wear clothes——"

"I don' think study is like work to me. I love it. An' I love people—every kin', scholars, working people—you know, every kin'."

His moody eyes took in her eagerly mobile face; then dropped, and he stabbed his knife at the deck.

"Of course, we know that all is no' right in America. The men of money have too much power. The governmen' is confuse', sometimes very weak and foolish. The newspapers don' tell all the things they shoul'. But it is so healthy, jus' the same! There is so much chance for ever' kin' of idea to be hear'! An' so many won'erful books! Often I think you real Americans don' know how won'erful it is, you get excite' abou' little things. I love Americ . The women are free there. There is more hope there than anywhere else in the worl'. I wish China coul' be like that."

"I QUIT college," said he. "You see, I've never looked at things as you do."

"Bu' you have such a won'erful chance!"

"I know. And I've wasted it. But I'm changing. I—it wouldn't be fair of course to talk about—about what I was talking about—not now—but I am seeing things—everything—through new eyes. They're your eyes. I'm going at the thing differently. You see, the Kanes, when you get right down to it, don't think about anything but money."

"I like to think about beauty," said she.

"I wonder if I could do that?"

"Why no'?"

"Well—it's kind of a new idea."

"Listen!" she reached out, plainly without a personal thought, and took his hand. "I'm going to reci' some poetry that I love."

Thrilled by the clasp of her hand, his mind eager wax to her stronger mind, his gaze clinging to her pretty mouth, he listened while she repeated the little poem of William B. Yeats beginning—

> "All the words that I utter,
> And all the words that I write . . ."

At first he stirred restlessly; then watching, doglike, fell to listening. The disconcerting thing was that it could mean so much to her. For it did—her dark eyes were bright, and her chin uplifted. Her quaint accent of which she seemed unaware, and her soft, sweet voice touched his spirit with an exquisite vague pain.

"It is music," said she.

"I don't see how you remember it all," said he listlessly.

"Jus' the soun's. Oh, it woul' be won'erful to make words do that. So often I wish I ha' been born American, so it woul' be my language too."

She went on, breathlessly, with Yeats's—

> "When you are old and gray and full of sleep . . ."

And then, still in pensive vein, she took up Kipling's "L'Envoi"—the one beginning "There's a whisper down the field." Clearly she felt the sea, too; and the yearning of those wandering souls to whom life is wistful adventure and the world an inviting labyrinth of beautiful hours. She seemed to know the "Child's Garden of Verse" from cover to cover, and other verse of Stevenson's. It was all strange to him excepting "In winter I get up at night." He knew that as a song.

And so it came about that on a dingy Yangtze junk, at the feet of a Manchu girl from America, Rocky Kane felt for the first time the glow and thrill of finely rhythmical English.

She went on, almost as if she had forgotten him. William Watson's "April, April" she loved, she said, and read it with a quick feeling for the capricious blend of smiles and tears. It dawned on him that she was a born actress. He did not know, of course, that the theatrical tradition lies deeper in Manchu and Chinese culture than in that of any Western people.

She recited the beautiful "Song" of Richard Le Gallienne beginning—

> "She's somewhere in the sunlight strong . . ."

And followed this with bits from Bliss Carman, and other bits from Henley's "London Nocturnes," and from Wilfred Blunt and Swinburne and Mrs. Browning. She had a curiously strong feeling for the color of Medieval Italy. She spoke reverently of Dante. Villon she knew, too, and Racine and the French classicists. She even murmured tenderly de Musset's *"J'ai dis à mon cœur,"* in French, of which he caught not a word and was ashamed. For he had cut French, too.

And then, as the sun mounted higher and the gentle rush of the river along the hull and the continuous chantey of the oarsmen floated more and more soothingly to their ears, they fell quiet, her hand still pleasantly in his. Together they hummed certain of the current popular songs, he thinking them good, she smiling not unhappily as her voice blended prettily with his. And Griggsby Doane heard them.

At last she murmured—

"I think I coul' rest now."

"I'm glad," said he, and drew down a coil of rope for a pillow, and left her sleeping there.

V

DOANE heard his step, but for a moment could not lift his head. Finally the boy, standing respectfully, spoke his name—

"Mr. Doane!"

"Yes."

"May I sit here with you?"

"Of course. Do."

"I've got to talk to somebody. It's so strange. You see, she and I—Miss Hui Fei—it's all been such a whirl I couldn't think, but——"

That sentence never got finished. The boy dropped down on the deck and clasped his knees. Doane, very gravely, considered him. He was young, fresh, slim. He had changed, definitely; a degree of quiet had come to him. And there could be no mistaking the unearthly light in his eyes. The love that is color and sunshine and exquisite song had touched and transformed him.

DOANE could not speak. He waited. Young Kane finally brought himself with obvious, earnest effort in a sense to earth. But his voice was unsteady in a boyish way.

"Mr. Doane," he asked, "do you believe in miracles?"

Thoughtfully, deliberately, Doane bowed his great head.

"I am forced to," he replied.

"You've seen men change—from dirty, selfish brutes, I mean, to something decent, worth while?"

"Many times."

"Really? But does it have to be religion?"

"I don't know."

"Can it be love? The influence of a woman, I mean—a girl?"

"Might that not be more or less the same thing?"

"Do you really think that?"

Again the great head bowed. And there was a long silence.

Rocky broke it.

"I wish you would tell me exactly how you feel about marriage between the races."

"Why—really——"

"You must have observed a lot, all these years out here. And the pater tells me that you're an able man, except that you've sort of lost your perspective. He did tell me that he'd love to have you with him if you could only bring yourself around to our ways." Rocky, even now, could see this only as a profound compliment. He rushed on: "Oh, don't misunderstand me! She doesn't love me yet. How could she? I've got to earn the right even to speak of it again. But if I should earn the right—in time—tell me, could an American make her happy?"

"I'm afraid I can't answer that general question."

But Rocky felt that he was kind. "The pater says I'd be wrecking my life. He says she'd always be pulled two ways—you know! God! He seemed to think I had only to ask her and she'd come. He doesn't understand."

"No," said Doane. "I'm afraid he couldn't understand."

"You feel that too? It's very perplexing. I know I've spoken carelessly about the Chinese——"

"She is a Manchu."

"I know now. I didn't even know they weren't the same. I've spoken meanly about them all. I looked down on them. I did! But oh, if I could only express it! We've been talking a long time, she and I. I don't mind telling you I'm taking a pretty bitter lesson right now. She knows so much. She has such fine—well, ideals——"

"Certainly."

"Oh, you've noticed that! Well, I feel crude beside her. Of course, I am."

(*Continued on page 103*)

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Looney the Mutt

By Don Marquis

LOONEY had but one object in life, one thought, one conscious motive of existence—to find Slim again. After he found Slim, things would be different, things would be better, somehow. Just how, Looney did not know.

Looney did not know much, anyhow. Likely he would never have known much, in the most favorable circumstances. And the circumstances under which he had passed his life were scarcely conducive to mental growth. He could remember, vaguely, that he had not always been called Looney Hogan. There had been a time when he was called Kid Hogan. Something had happened inside his head one day, and then there had come a period of which he remembered nothing at all; after that, when he could remember again, he was not Kid any more, but Looney. Perhaps some one had hit him on the head. People were always hitting him, before he knew Slim. And now that Slim was gone, people were always hitting him again. When he was with Slim, Slim had not let people hit him—often.

So he must find Slim again; Slim, who was the only God he had ever known. In the course of time he became known, in his own queer world, from Baltimore to Seattle, from Los Angeles to Boston, as Slim's Lost Mutt, or as Looney the Mutt. Looney did not particularly resent being called a dog, but he never called himself the "Mutt"; he stuck to Looney; Slim had called him Looney, and Looney must, therefore, be right.

THE humors of Looney's world are not, uniformly, kindly humors. Giving Looney the Mutt a "bum steer" as to Slim's whereabouts was considered a legitimate jest.

"Youse ain't seen Slim Matchett anywheres?" he would ask of hobo or wobbly, working stiff or yeggman, his faded pale-blue eyes peering from his weather-worn face with the same anxious intensity, the same eager hope, as if he had not asked the question ten thousand times before.

And the other wanderer, if he were one that knew of Looney the Mutt and Looney's quest would answer, like as not:

"Slimmy de Match? Uh-huh! I seen Slim last mont' in Chi. He's lookin' fer youse, Looney."

One day the Burlington Crip, who lacked a hand, and who looked so mean that it was of common report that he had got sore at himself and bitten it off, varied the reply a bit by saying:

"I seen Slim last week, an' he says: 'Where t'hell's dat kid o' mine? Youse ain't seen nuttin' o' dat kid o' mine, has you, Crip? Dat kid o' mine give me de slip, Crip. He lammistered, and I ain't seen him since. If youse gets yer lamps on dat kid o' mine, Crip, give him a wallop on his mush fer me, an' tell him to come an' find me an' I'm gonna give him another one.'"

Lest his well-established reputation as a humorist obscure other considerable story-telling gifts, Don Marquis occasionally turns to an entirely different type of fiction. Here he takes you to the under-world of vagrants and itinerant crooks, and introduces a far from conventional hobo—a witless youth, butt of the crude jokes of coarse yeggs and dips and panhandlers, whose dog-like devotion to the one bright star of his life is the appealing theme of an affecting story.

Looney stared and wondered and grieved. It hurt him especially that Slim should think that he, Looney, had run away from Slim; he agonized anew that he could not tell Slim at once that such was not the truth. And he wondered and grieved at the change that must have taken place in Slim, who now promised him "a wallop on the mush." For Slim had never struck him. It was Slim who had always kept other people from striking him. It was Slim who had, upon occasion, struck other people to protect him—once, in a hangout among the lakeside sand-dunes south of Chicago, Slim had knifed a man who had, by way of jovial by-play to enliven a dull afternoon, flung Looney into the fire.

It never occurred to Looney to doubt, entirely, these bearers of misinformation. He was hunting Slim, and of course Slim was hunting Looney. His nature was all credulity. Such mind as the boy possessed—he was somewhere in his twenties, but had the physique of a boy—was saturated with belief in Slim, with faith in Slim, and he thought that all the world must admire Slim. He did not see why any one should tell lies that might increase Slim's difficulties, or his own.

THERE was a big red star he used to look at nights, when he slept in the open, and because it seemed to him bigger and better and more splendid than any of the other stars, he took to calling it Slim's star. It was a cocky, confident-looking star; it looked as if it would know how to take care of itself, and Slim had been like that. It looked good-natured, too, and Slim had been that way. When Looney had rustled the scoffin's for Slim, Slim had always let him have some of the best chow—or almost always. And he used to talk to that star about Slim when he was alone. It seemed sympathetic. And although he believed the hoboes were telling him the truth when they said that they had seen Slim, it was apparent even to his intelligence that they had no real sympathy with his quest.

Once he did find a certain sympathy, if no great understanding. He worked a week, one Spring, for a farmer in Indiana. The farmer wished to keep him, for that Summer at least, for Looney was docile, willing enough, and had a natural, unconscious tact with the work-horses. Looney was never afraid of animals, and they were never afraid of him. Dogs took to him, and the instant liking of dogs had often stood him in good stead in his profession.

"Why won't you stay?" asked the farmer.

"Slim's lookin' fer me, somewheres," said Looney. And he told the farmer about Slim. The farmer, having perceived Looney's mental twilight, and feeling kindly toward the creature, advanced an argument that he thought might hold him.

"Slim is just as likely to find you if you stay in one place, as if you go travelin' all over the country," he said.

"Huh-uh," said Looney. "He ain't, Mister. It's this way, Mister: every time I stop long anywheres, Slim, he passes me by."

AND then he continued, after a pause: "Slim, he was always good to me, Mister. I kinda want to be the one that finds Slim, instead of just stayin' still an' waitin' to be found."

They were standing in the dusk by the barn, and the early stars were out. Looney told him about Slim's star.

"I want to be the guy that does the findin'," went on Looney presently, "because I was the guy that done the losin'. One night they was five or six of us layin' under a lot of railroad ties we had propped up against a fence to keep the weather off, an' we figgered on hoppin' a train fer Chi that night. Well, the train comes along, but I'm asleep. See? The rest of t'gang gits into an empty in de dark, an' I don't wake up. I s'pose Slim he t'inks I'm wit' t'gang, but I don't wake up under them ties till mornin'. I went to Chi soon's I could, but I ain't never glommed him since, Mister. I didn't find him dere. An' dat's t' way I lost Slim, Mister."

"Maybe," suggested the farmer, "he is dead."

"Nit," said Looney. "He ain't dead. If Slim was croaked or anything, I'd be wised up to it. Look at that there star. Dat is Slim's star, like I told youse. If Slim had been bumped off, or anything, Mister, that star wouldn't be shinin' that way, Mister."

And he went back to his own world—his world—which was a succession of freight and cattle cars, ruinous sheds and shelters in dubious suburbs near to railroad sidings, police stations, workhouses, jails, city missions, transient hangouts in bedraggled clumps of wood, improvised shacks shared with others of his kind in vacant lots in sooty industrial towns, chance bivouacs amidst lumber piles and under dripping water-tanks, lucky infrequent lodgings in slum hotels that used to charge fifteen cents for a bed and now

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charge a quarter, golden moments in vile barrooms and blind tigers, occasional orgies in quarries or gravel pits or abandoned tin-roofed tool houses, uneasy loiterings and interrupted slumbers in urban parks and the squares or outskirts of villages. Sometimes he worked, as he had with the Indiana farmer, worked with the wheat harvesters of the Northwest, or the snow shovelers of the metropolises, or the fruit-gatherers of California, but more often he loafed, and rustled grub and small coin from the charitably disposed.

It all seemed the natural way of life to Looney. He could not remember anything else. He viewed the people of the world who did not live so, and whom he saw to be the majority, as strange, unaccountable beings whom he could never hope to understand; he vaguely perceived that they were stronger than he and his ever-hiking clan, and he knew that they might do unpleasant things to him with their laws and their courts and their strength, but he bore them no rancor, unlike many of his associates.

He had no theories about work or idleness; he accepted either as it came; he had little conscious thought about anything, except finding Slim again. And one thing worried him: Slim, who was supposed to be looking for Looney, even as Looney was looking for Slim, left no mark. He was forever looking for it, searching for the traces of Slim's knife—a name, a date, a destination, a message bidding Looney to follow or to wait—on freight-sheds and water-tanks, and known and charted telegraph poles and the tool-houses of construction gangs. But Slim, always just ahead of him, as he thought, continually returning and passing him, left no mark, no wanderer's patrin, behind.

Looney left his own marks everywhere, but, strangely enough, it seemed that Slim never saw them. Looney remembered that one time when he and Slim were together, Slim had wished to meet and confer with the Burlington Crip, and had left word to that effect, penciled and carved and sown by the speech of the mouth, from the Barbary Coast to the Erie Basin. And the Burlington Crip, with his snaggle teeth and his stump where a hand had been, had joined them on the Brooklyn water-front within two months. It had been simple, and Looney wondered why Slim omitted this easy method of communication. Perhaps Slim was using it, and Looney was not finding the marks. He knew himself for stupid, and set his failure down to that, never to neglect on Slim's part. For Slim was Slim, and Slim could do no wrong.

HIS habit of searching for some scratched or written word of Slim's became known to his whole section of the underworld, and furnished material for an elaboration of the standing jest at his expense. When ennui descended upon some chance gathering in one of the transient hangouts—caravanserai as familiar to the loose-foot, casual guests, from coast to coast, as was ever the Blackstone in Chicago or the Biltmore in New York to those who read this simple history—it was customary for some wag to say:

"Looney, I seen a mark that looked like Slim's mark on a shed down to Alexandria, Virginny, right by where the Long Bridge starts over to Washington."

And it might be that Looney would start at once, without a word, for Alexandria. Therein lay the cream of this subtle witticism for its perpetrators—in Looney's swift departures.

Or it might be that Looney would sit and ponder, his washed-out eyes interrogating the speaker in a puzzled fashion, but never doubting. And then the jester would say, perhaps: "Why don't you get a move onto you, Looney? You're gonna miss Slim again."

And Looney would answer, perchance: "Slim, he ain't there now. The' was one of them wobblies' bump-off men sayin' he seen Slim in Tacoma two weeks ago, an' Slim was headin' this way. I'm gonna wait fer him a while longer."

But he never waited long. He could never make himself. As he had told the Indiana farmer, he was afraid to wait long. It was the Burlington Crip who had made him afraid to do that. The Crip had told him one time: "Looney, Slim went through here last night, while youse was asleep over on that lumber pile. I forgets youse is lookin' fer him or I'd 'a' tipped him off youse was here."

SLIM had been within a hundred yards of him, and he had been asleep and had never known! What would Slim think, if he knew that? So, thereafter, he was continually tortured by the fancy that Slim might be passing him in the night; or that Slim, while he himself was riding the rods underneath a railway car, might be on the blind baggage of that very train, and would hop off first and be missed again. From day to day he became more muddled and perplexed trying to decide whether it would be better to choose this route or that, whether it would be better to stop here a week, or go yonder with all possible speed. And from month to month he developed more and more the questing, peering, wavering manner of the lost dog that seeks its master.

Looney was always welcome in the hangouts of the wandering under-world. Not only was he a source of diversion, a convenient butt, but few could rustle grub so successfully. His meager frame and his wistfulness, his evident feebleness of intellect, drew alms from the solvent population, and Looney faithfully brought his takings to the hangouts and was dispatched again for more. Servant and butt he was to such lords of life as the Burlington Crip and the English Basher. But he did not mind so long as he was not physically maltreated—as he often was. The occasional crimes of his associates, the occasional connection of some of them with industrial warfare here and there, Looney sometimes participated in; but he never understood. If he were told to do so and so, for the most part he did it. If he were asked to do too much, or was beaten up for his stupidity, and he was always stupid, he quietly slunk away at his first opportunity.

The English Basher was a red-faced savage with fists as hard and rough as tarred rope; and he conceived the idea that Looney, should be his kid, and wait upon him, even as he had been Slim's kid. Looney afraid of the man, for a time seemed to acquiesce. But the Basher had reckoned without Looney's faculty for blundering.

He dispatched Looney one day, ostensibly to bum a handout, but in reality to get the lay of a certain house in a suburb near Cincinnati, which the Basher meditated cracking the next convenient night. Looney returned with the food but without the information. He had been willing enough, for he admired yeggmen and all their ways and works, and was withheld by no moral considerations from anything he was asked to do; but he had bungled. He had been in the kitchen, he had eaten his own scoffin's there, he had talked with the cook for twenty minutes, he had even brought up from the cellar a scuttle of coal for the kitchen range to save the cook's back, but he actually knew less about that house, its plan, its fastenings, its doors and basement windows than the Basher had been able to gather with a single stroke of the eye as he loitered down the street.

"Cripes! Whadje chin about with the kitchen mechanic all dat time, you?" demanded the Basher.

"She was stringin' me along," said Looney humbly, "an' I spilled to her about me an Slim."

"Slim! —— —— yer, I've a mind t' croak yer!" cried the Basher.

And he nearly did it, knocking the boy down repeatedly, till finally Looney lay still upon the ground.

"S'elp me," said the Basher, "I've a mind to give yer m' boots! You get up an' beat it! An' if I ever gets my lamps onto you again I *will* croak you, by Gawd, an' no mistake!"

Looney staggered to his feet and hobbled to a safe distance. And then, spitting out a broken tooth, he dared to mutter: "If Slimmy was here, he'd see de color o' youse insides, Slimmy would. Slimmy, he knifed a yegg oncet wot done less'n dat t'me!"

IT WAS only a week or two after he left the Basher that Looney's faith in Slim's star was tested again. Half a dozen of the brotherhood were gathered about a fire in a gravel pit in northern Illinois, swapping yarns and experiences and making merry. It was a tremendous fire, and lighted up the hollow as if it were the entrance to Gehenna, flinging the grotesque shadows of the men against the overhanging embankments, and causing the inhabitants of a village a mile or so away to wonder what farmer's haystack was aflame. The tramps were wasting five times the wood they needed, after their fashion. They had eaten to repletion, and they were wasting the left-over food from their evening gorge; they had booze; they were smoking; they felt, for the hour, at peace with the world.

"Wot ever *did* become of dat Slim?" asked the Burlington Crip, who happened to be of the party, looking speculatively at Looney. Even the sinister Crip, for the nonce, was not toting with him his usual mordant grouch.

Looney was tending the fire, while he listened to the tales of the spacious days of the great Johnny Yegg himself, and other titans of the road who have now assumed the state of legendary heroes; and he was, as usual, saying nothing.

"Slim? Slimmy t' Match wot Looney here's been tailin' after fer so long?" said the San Diego Kid. "Slim, he was bumped off in Paterson t'ree or four years ago."

"He wasn't neither," spoke up Looney. "Tex, here, seen him in Chi last mont'."

And, indeed, Tex had told Looney so. But now, thus directly appealed to, Tex

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answered nothing. And for the first time Looney began to get the vague suspicion that these, his friends, might have trifled with him before. Certainly they were serious now. He looked around the sprawled circle and sensed that their manner was somehow different from the attitude with which they had usually discussed his quest for Slim.

"Bumped off?" said Tex. "How?"

"A wabbly done it," said the San Diego Kid. "Slim, he was scabbin'. Strike-breakin'. And they was some wabblies there helpin' on the strike. See? An' this wabbly bumps Slim off."

"He didn't neither," said Looney again.

"T' hell he didn't? He said he did," said the San Diego Kid pacifically. "Is a guy gonna say he's bumped off a guy unless he's bumped him off?"

Looney, somewhat shaken, withdrew from the group to seek comfort from the constellations; and particularly from that big, red star, the apparent king of stars, which he had come to think of as Slim's star, and vaguely, as Slim's mascot. It was brighter and redder than ever that night, Looney thought, and sitting on a discarded railroad tie and staring at the planet, Looney gradually recovered his faith.

"HE AIN'T neither been bumped off, Slim ain't," he muttered, "an' I'm gonna find him yet."

And Slim had not been bumped off, however sincere the San Diego Kid may have been in his belief.

It was some months later that Looney found him in a little city in Pennsylvania—or found some one that looked like him.

Looney had dropped from a freight-train early in the morning, had rustled himself some grub, had eaten two good meals and had part of a day's sleep, and now, just as dark was coming on, and the street lamps were being lighted, was loafing aimlessly on the platform of the railway depot. He purposed to take a train south that night, when it became so dark that he could crawl into an empty in the yards without too much danger of being seen, and he was merely putting in the time until full night came on.

While he was standing idly so, an automobile drew up beside the station platform and an elegantly dressed and slender man of about thirty got out. He assisted from the car a woman and a small child, and they made toward the door of the waiting-room.

"Slim!" cried Looney, rushing forward.

For this was Slim—it must be Slim—it was Slimmy the Match in every feature—and yet, the car!—the clothes—the woman—the baby—the prosperity— Was it Slim?

"Slim!" cried Looney again, his heart leaping in his eager body. "It's me, Slim! It's Looney! I've got youse again, Slim! Gawd! I've found yuh!"

The woman hastily snatched the child up into her arms, with a suppressed scream, and recoiled.

The man made no sound, but he, too, drew back a step, not seeming to see Looney's outstretched hand.

But he did see it—he saw more than that. He saw, as if they were flashed before him at lightning speed upon a cinema screen, a dozen scenes of a wild and reckless and indigent youth that he had thought was dead forever; he saw these rough-neck years suddenly leap alive and stalk toward him again, toward him and his; he saw his later years of industry, his hard-won success, his position so strenuously battled for, his respectability that was become so dear to him, all his house of life so laboriously builded, crumbling before the touch of this torn and grotesque outcast that confronted and claimed him, this wavering, dusty lunatic whom he dimly remembered. If his wife knew—if her people knew—if the business men of this town were to know——

He shuddered and turned sick, and then with a sudden recovery he took his child from its mother and guided her before him into the waiting-room.

LOONEY watched them enter, in silence. He stood dazed for a moment, and then he slowly turned and walked down the railroad track beyond the limits of the town. There, upon a spot of turf beside the right of way, he threw himself upon his face and sobbed and moaned, as a broken-hearted child sobs, as a dog moans upon its master's grave.

But after a while he looked up. Slim's star was looking down at him, red and confident and heartening as ever. He gazed at it a long time, and then an idea took form in his ruined brain and he said aloud:

"Now, dat wasn't *really* Slim! I been lookin' fer Slim so long I t'ink I see Slim where he ain't! Dat was jus' some guy wot looks like Slimmy. Slimmy, he wouldn't never of gone back on an old pal like dat!"

The rumble of an approaching train caught his ears. He got to his feet and prepared to board it.

"Slim, he's waitin' fer me somewheres," he told the star. "I may be kinda looney about some t'ings, but I knows Slim, an' dey ain't no yellow streak nowheres in Slim!"

And with unshaken loyalty Looney the Mutt boarded the train and set off upon his endless quest anew.

Lost River

By Wilton Agnew Barrett

ON THE lost and lovely river there were dreams to dream aplenty
Made of haze upon the river that held no remembering,
Then my days were long as summer and my years far short of twenty,
And the world was as the river, a smooth and idle thing.

For the river offered time for play and time for youthful gladness,
And chance for tender vision in the wide glass of the tide;
Its days were as a guerdon without the meed of sadness,
And if one had a solemn thought, it was the river sighed.

And the river through the gracious arch of sunlight still went slipping,
Flowing out in golden quiet to some homeland in the seas,
Past little harbors full of reeds like masts of little shipping,
Where a child might go ashore and walk on faery quays.

I am dreaming, I am dreaming. I was never on that river,
All my days were spent in cities where the heart forgets to roam,
And the river may take others where the safe isles shine and quiver,
But some narrow gusty street of town shall bring me home.

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"Pop" Geers, Veteran Reinsman

By Kathlene Burnett Winter

AT AN age when most men decide on the old armchair and a take-it-easy-to-the-end existence, "Pop" Geers, veteran horse-trainer and driver, is still literally in the harness. Neither age—"Pop" has celebrated his sixty-ninth birthday—nor more knock-out accidents than any other driver can blame on his unlucky star, have been able to put "Pop" out of the game. He has been training champion horses and winning races for more than fifty years, and he is still doing it and has no intention of quitting yet.

As long ago as "Pop" can remember, when he was a freckle-faced Tennessee farmer's son named "Edward F.," he wanted to drive something. So he began with two calves his father had given him. First he tied ropes around the horns of each and drove them, one at a time, around a field. Since the calves did not protest much—for calves—Edward was encouraged to try them as a team. He yoked them as he had seen his father yoke oxen, but, to make sure they did not get away, he also tied their tails firmly together with a champion rope.

Edward started the calves across his father's grove, but the calves finished the trip. One of them managed to unyoke himself and both of them headed for a good-sized tree on a calf-run, which, we understand, is an all-legged sprint at airplane speed. Not having any second "looey" around to shout "Squads right or left," as the case may be, the calves decided on opposite sides of the tree, with the result that the smaller animal emerged minus several inches of tail.

Edward declared that calves were not the kind of animal he had wanted to drive, anyway, and traded them, as soon as they were sufficiently convalescent, for a two-year-old colt.

Edward's sure-enough fame began at the age of seventeen, when he had a hunch that a certain plain-looking nag doing service for the itinerant butcher had missed her calling and nursed secret ambitions for a race-track career. Edward purchased the mare for $125 and then presented the animal with a home-made race-track which circled or, as "Pop" admits to-day, zigzagged around a near-by hill. The young trainer's surveying-kit had consisted of a few stakes, the longest rope he could steal, his two feet and his eye. His road-building facilities had been confined to his father's plow, borrowed without leave.

Under such circumstances one could not blame even an ambitious horse for preferring private life and a butcher's cart to the glamours of race-track fame. Nevertheless, Ed's mare finally attained a speed of 2:50, which, like wages, meant more in those days than now; could outbrush any equine rival she might meet on the road, and sold for $270 more than our budding horse-trader paid for her.

"Pop" Geers, grand old man of the turf.

When the neighboring Tennessee farmers began sending their favorite plugs to Ed, in the firm belief that he could make a race-track star out of any old horse, the boy's cup of ambition was full—until he heard of Grand Circuits and tasted the triumph of his first professional race.

Since that time Ed Geers has driven in an average of one hundred races a year, has "made" more race-track champions than any other horse-trainer alive, and has revised his ideas of speed. A complete list of his achievements would read like a combination genealogy and income report. Among "Pop's" top-of-the-list victories are the first $50,000 trotting race ever held in this country, when "Pop" beat Thomas W. Lawson's Boralma with Lord Derby in 2:05¾; the Transylvania, one of the greatest of turf classics, trotted at Lexington, Kentucky, which he won with Onward Silver in 1901 and with Etawah in 1914, and the Kentucky Futurity, the greatest three-year-old race, equivalent to the English Derby on the trotting turf, won with the Harvester in 1908 and with Etawah in 1913.

Years ago "Pop" predicted that a pacer would be born who would go a mile in harness in two minutes, but he doubted if he would live to see the record made. Then, in 1916, when "Pop" was sixty-five years old, he himself drove Napoleon Direct under the wire to the time of 1:59¾.

"Pop" looks upon this race as his biggest triumph, but he still insists that the greatest feat of his career as a reinsman took place when he won the world record of a mile in 2:14 with Belle Hamlin, Justina and Globe harnessed three abreast to a four-wheeled skeleton wagon. Three horses harnessed together are instinctively racing with each other and if one breaks it is almost impossible to steady the other two. We admit that this triplicate driving was an accomplishment and two-thirds, but we think "Pop" must have forgotten about the calves, all the same.

Speaking of calves, there is another four-footed animal which "Pop" has tried to drive and doesn't want to drive any more. One year when headline races were scheduled in California the weather man decided to start a rainy season exhibition the same week. The heavens downpoured until the race-track looked like a mortar bed. Ordinary track-drying methods were about as effective as a bailing kit would be for a sinking ocean liner.

Then some one had the brilliant idea of borrowing a near-by flock of sheep, 2,300 strong, and driving them around the track until the mud had been kneaded to firmness. Day after day the sheep were prodded around the course because, as soon as they had trotted muddily off home at dusk, the heavens would pour down another nightful of rain and the track would be as bad as ever the next morning. "Pop" dreamed of armies of bleating, mud-coated sheep and began to taste wool in the breakfast doughnuts.

Finally it was decided to have the race, rain or no rain, mud or no mud, and—"Pop" Geers' champion horse lost to his rival for the first time in their many contest races together. Possibly this has something to do with the fact that "Pop" never wants to drive sheep again and prefers beefsteak to mutton as a meat.

THERE may be better drivers than "Pop" Geers—we won't argue on that point, because these race-track fans aren't comfortable persons to argue with—but we are sure there is no more *popular* driver on the Grand Circuit than "The Grand Old Man of the Turf."

In the stables he is known as "The Silent Tennesseean" because of his self-control and slowness to anger, and the drivers who have swept around the course with him have had to admit that he plays fair. "Pop" preaches a little sermon occasionally, the text of which is, "Loud talk, profanity, vulgarity and obscenity have no more place in the training-stable than they have in a bank, a store, or even a drawing-room." You see, "Pop" has respect for the horses, as well as love for them.

When "Pop" guides his horse quietly on to the track—there are no circus-performer flourishes about "Pop's" driving—the grand-stand crowd bursts into cheers of "Pop!" "Pop Geers! The Grand Old Man!" Not long ago, when "Pop" had returned from one of his numerous enforced vacations to a hospital, limping a bit more on the leg which had already been broken twice before, five hundred prominent horsemen announced a "Geers' Day," drank "Pop's" health—we take it for granted that this was before prohibition days—and presented him with a silver loving-cup.

No wonder "Pop" looks upon an occasional broken leg or shoulder or head as merely in the day's work, and no wonder he stays in the game!

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The Little Cave-Boy

By James Hopper

THE railroad ran close to the high red buttes, and the soil between was hard and black. The warped wooden houses which, in one row, made up the village, all faced this strip of blasted, ugly earth, and had their backs against the base of the red cliffs which far above were pitted so curiously with caverns and with holes. Somehow, in this village, one seldom crossed the track into the wide plain beyond; one's world was the narrow black strip, and the little girl would have been very lonely and desolate had it not been for the little cave-boy.

She would go up to see him every day in his cave. She started after school, by the path which, from the schoolhouse back fence, climbed the red cliffs in a long diagonal. But she did not follow the path all the way up. At a place where the path made an angle to the right, and where to the left the rock had been turned and polished by the winds and the rains to the form of a round tower, she stopped and looked guardedly all about her. Then when she had made sure she was all alone and no one could possibly be watching her, she suddenly stepped off into space; she vanished.

AS A matter of fact, what she did was to slide herself carefully around the red tower, her little nose flattened against the sun-warmed stone so tightly she could hardly breathe, till her left foot, adventuring, felt beneath its curled toes the edge of a ledge. An altogether breathless moment came then. But bravely she pushed off, recovered balance with a supple twist of the waist, and found herself safe on the ledge.

Here she had a sense of having left the world altogether; of being in a division of space where no one ever came. The ledge was before her, broad and smooth as a highway, along the side of the cliff. She followed it, passed the mouths of three caves and entered the fourth.

The little cave-boy was there, always there; he never disappointed her. He stood at the back of the cave, a bit remote and frail and indistinct in the soft gray light. He smiled at her happily, yet just a little sadly. Then sitting down in the center of the cave, they played with small white stones.

There was something strange about the little cave-boy. The little girl felt this only dimly, because she had not lived years enough to become thoroughly accustomed to things as they are; but still there was something strange about the little cave-boy. For instance, although, playing, they sat very close, they never touched. Their hands, in the game, flew up beneath the tossed pebbles, fluttered, crossed and recrossed, but never touched. Also the little cave-boy, sweetly as he played, was always a little sad. He looked at her as, in a picture, people look at sails that are going far away. And he never spoke. At least when he had told her something, later she could not remember having heard his voice. He let her know his thoughts, but it was her own voice which spoke them. So she prattled a good deal as they played.

"One, two, three, four, five—oh, you are going to win, little cave-boy!

"Six, seven—now you have missed! You did it on purpose, little cave-boy! You were afraid I should be unhappy if I did not win. You must not do that way, little cave-boy, you must try to beat me; really try! You must play hard, hard! I wish you would smile, little cave-boy; you are always looking out to sea. There! Oh, that was a nice smile, little boy! But you did it just to please me. *I* know, cave-boy!

"One, two, three, four, five. You like me, don't you, little boy? See, to-day I have on my blue gown! I like it, too. I am pretty, am I not, in my little blue gown? Six, seven, eight. Yesterday I wore my yellow one; you like that one too, don't you? But wait a bit, little cave-boy—oh, you just wait a bit! I have a rose-colored one! I'll put on that rose-colored one for you some day.

"Eight, nine—but it's my eyes you like best of all, isn't it? Oh, I like your eyes too, little cave-boy. They are brown, and so soft. But when they look at me, they make me feel a bit like crying—please be gay, little cave-boy! Mine are blue—there, I have missed! Your turn, little cave-boy!

"You like my blue eyes, don't you, little cave-boy? They are like lakes? I don't know; I have never seen any lakes, little boy. Lakes in the sky? Ah, yes—I see what you mean. The lakes you see up in the sky just when the sun has set—yes, they *are* blue, little boy—oh, little cave-boy, I love you!"

When the sun began to shine pink at the entrance of the cave, they had to part. The little girl rose; he also rose. He stood a little remote and dim within the cave, as she, just outside, dropped him curtsies and blew him kisses, then ran quickly away so as not to cry.

SHE retraced her steps; she slid around the rock which was like a tower. The strange part of it was that as soon as she had passed the tower and was once more on the path, she forgot all that which had taken place—forgot the little boy and the cave, and what she had said and what she had done. It was only on the next morning, when she awoke, that it came all back to her. And then she was not sure whether it had really happened, or whether she had simply dreamed it, asleep there, in her small white bed.

One day the news broke within the family of the little girl that their fortunes had changed and that they were going away. The bad times had passed. They were going back to a big city of the East to live once more the fine life which had been theirs in past happy days, which had ended almost with the coming of the little girl.

She played a last afternoon with the little cave-boy. She was full of what was going to happen to her, and at first did not know that her heart was sick.

"ONE, two, three, four—you missed; you are not playing well to-day, little cave-boy. Your hands act as if they were very tired. One, two, three—you know, little cave-boy, I am going away. We're all rich and happy again, and I am going to a great place with many people; I am going to have books and flowers and beautiful music. I am going to a school in a beautiful park; I'll ride horses, and swim, and dance. Dance, little cave-boy! And I'll be taken to the city often to see wondrous plays and hear wonderful music.

"Nine, ten, eleven—I am beating you to-day; you are playing very badly. I wonder whom I'll have to play with now. Ah, whom will I play with? I shall miss you dreadfully; dreadfully!

"Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen! There, where I am going are many people. And they meet and speak intelligently of many things. There are large buildings full of books that hold everything that is beautiful and wise—oh, when you see me once more, little cave-boy, you won't *know* me, I'll be so tall and beautiful and wise! But—but—oh, what is the matter, little cave-boy? You look so terribly sad! Do not look that way, little cave-boy, I can't *stand* it—Oh, I shall not go away at all!

"You smile—ah, that is nice! I love your smile, little cave-boy; it is tender and true. You don't mind, do you, if I go away a little while? I'll come back, some day, and be so big and beautiful; and we'll meet right here, and play again with these clean white stones. Meanwhile I shall carry you about in my heart, little cave-boy; you'll be in there just as in a wee small cave!"

Thus she prattled as they played the last afternoon away, while little by little her gay excitement at the wonder of the coming days changed to heart sickness. And finally the light was pink at the entrance of the cave, and they rose.

Ah, it was hard to say good-by! She stood at the entrance of the cave, and curtsied and curtsied, and blew kisses and blew kisses, and could not bear to go. And finally, desperately, she ran back into the cave, to where he was standing within, a little dim, and tried—what she knew could not be done—tried to kiss him. But they could not kiss, they could not touch; it was possible for them to be so close they seemed to occupy the same space, and yet not be able to touch; for their separation

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"I was not here alone. I would come here to play with a little girl. To play with a dear little girl who was my sweet love."

was not of space. So she ran back to the entrance of the cave, and checking her rising sobs, smiled and curtsied, and blew him airy kisses, and whispered "I shall be back!" and then ran away as fast as she could for fear she would indeed sob aloud.

Once around the red tower, as usual she forgot everything, and, going down the path, wondered at the rain-drops which wet her face while the heavens above were so pellucidly clear. And it was only the next morning she remembered, when in the gray light of dawn her mother woke her.

But there was not time to lie there in the narrow bed and think. Everywhere about her was the urgency of departure. And the morning was still gray when they all stood by the track, shivering a little, their eyelids heavy, awaiting the coming of the train. It came; they boarded it; and it began to slide away. For a while it slid along the base of the red buttes. The little girl craned her neck trying to see the caves. But they were too high, she could not twist her neck enough, and by

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and by the train slid away altogether and left the buttes behind.

The little girl, in her new world, sheltered and cherished, gradually grew to an exquisite womanhood. The memory of the little cave-boy, a dim, gentle sadness in her heart, gave to her clear beauty a mystery and a veil. She had many suitors, but she was almost nineteen before she met the one she could love. For thrice three evenings they had strolled in a garden by the sea, and on this night, as rang the hour to part, there came a catch in his voice and he cried: "Oh, girl, I can not bear to leave you to-night; I can not bear to leave you ever!"

A sweet great yearning was in her soul; placing her head against his heart, she answered: "And I, too, wish to leave you never!" So they were married.

She was happy. He was still a boy. He had soft waving hair that she loved to stroke. He was strong and gay, yet when he thought he was alone, sometimes his brown eyes looked far in an expression that made her want to kiss him in passionate consolation.

And yet she was not altogether happy. A secret torment was within her. It came of the memory of the little cave-boy, which, although very dim now, yet had taken on a plaint of abandonment and forsaking. It came also from the fact that she had not told her husband of the little cave-boy.

So perfect was her love that she wanted all of herself to be his. Yet she had not been able to tell him of the little cave-boy. A sanctity haloed this memory, locked there within her heart, which held her from sharing it with even him whom she loved holily.

THIS was all the more strange, because what had first drawn her to her husband was the way he had of looking far, when he thought no one was near, at a departing sail, just as long ago the little cave-boy had done. One day, as, having come upon him at such a moment, she was straining his head to her bosom in inexplicable compassion, he freed himself with a smile and said gaily: "Listen, I have a surprise for you.

"We're going a-traveling to-morrow. We're going West—far—as far as the other ocean."

She sprang to her feet and clapped her hands. Then she went still in thought, and after a while cried: "Oh, let us stop on the way!

"Let us stop a little at the village where I lived when a small girl. It is by some red cliffs, and high above are caves."

"If it is by some red cliffs," he said teasingly, "and high above are caves, we must of course stop there. We shall do so."

Three days later, at high noon, they stepped out of the long black train which had borne them to the red buttes. They went loitering along the bleak main street, she recalling this, recalling that, and on to the small schoolhouse on the edge of the village. The pupils were out at lunch; she peered into the empty room and pointed to him the small desk which years age had been hers. He wanted to go in and kiss it, but she held him back, saying the teacher might suddenly return and catch him. Then they circled the yard to the start of the trail behind.

THEY turned, looked back at the village, the track, the limitless purple plain beyond, then, abstracted, began to stroll up the trail which, in a long diagonal, climbed across the face of the cliffs. She did not know just why she was doing this; she was not quite aware that she was doing this.

They came to the place where the trail turned to the right, and where to the left the rock had been fretted and polished by time into the shape of a round tower. And there something strange happened.

They had been walking hand in hand, then, as the path narrowed, he had dropped a trifle behind while she led the way. But now, as at this place, stirred with memories, she halted to look about her as when a little girl, always here she had halted and peered about her to make sure she was alone and unseen, he suddenly passed her. He passed her swiftly, and without hesitation stepped off to the left. He seemed to have passed off into space; he vanished. But almost immediately his voice came to her from the other side of the rock which was like a tower: "Come!" he called. "I'm standing on a ledge."

She, as she had done long ago, in turn left the safe path. She felt against her face the sun-warmed smoothness of the rock. A hand seized her elbow; she did not need it, as with a brave throwing of her whole self she gained the old remembered foothold. Then they were side by side upon the ledge.

She followed him; her heart was beating hard. They went along the ledge, which was broad almost as a highway, dustless as though unprofaned, yet troughed as though once much used. He passed three caves and entered the fourth.

The inevitableness which for several moments had held all his movements as if in a sheath, now suddenly left him. When she entered he was standing in the center of the cave looking about him curiously, as if of late awakened. Her eyes immediately went to the floor of the cave. There, in the center, almost at his feet, was a small heap of clean white stones.

The inevitableness now returned upon him. He let himself down to the floor. His hands idly ran through the small white stones. He tossed one up, caught it, tossed another. He looked up at her invitingly. "Come, let's play!" he said.

She dropped down beside him, and close side by side they played like children with the clean white stones. Their hands rose in the air like birds. They played thus a long time, silently, in the cool gray light, and she wondered how it was he did not hear the beating of her excited heart.

Finally he rose and stood in the center of the cave in the attitude he had held when she had come in after him. He looked about him curiously; he raised his arms and stretched himself. "It's queer, queer," he murmured.

"You know," he said, and his voice sounded very loud now in the confined space, "I feel as though I had been here before. Here before—oh, a million years ago!"

HIS eyes fell upon her contemplatively, then grew puzzled. "Or is it," he went on, "that I dreamed it when a boy? I don't know," he said. "I don't know. *Was* I here a million years ago, or have I dreamed of it when a boy?"

She had risen to her knees and was listening to him breathlessly.

A tender amusement came into his eyes, and stooping he raised her to him. "Listen," he said. "Listen. If I tell you something—will you be at all jealous?"

She did not answer.

"Will you?" he insisted, the love-light in his eyes.

Still she did not answer, and he laughed aloud. "Because, sweet," he said, "I was not here alone. I would come here to play with a little girl. To play with a dear little girl who was my sweet love."

"Oh, no, I am not jealous!" she cried vibrantly. "Oh, no, I am not jealous! Oh, no, I am not jealous!"

The vague oppression which had been at her heart had cleared to a wild happiness. She knew she had not abandoned the little cave-boy.

And she had not been disloyal to her husband in not telling him of the little cave-boy.

For he and the little cave-boy were one. He *was* the little cave-boy!

Garden Song

By Thelma Stillson

PIERROT came into the garden,
And merry he was and gay,
But he found a rose with its petals torn,
And a butterfly wing all bruised and worn,
And a drifting sob on the wind was borne,
When he came into the garden,
Alone, on a summer day.

Pierrot came into the garden,
And the garden was sad and gray,
But there where the world was still with snow
Love ran laughing to touch Pierrot,
And the drifts of a sudden came to glow,
When he passed out of the garden,
With her, on a winter day!

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"Dime Novelties" That Came True

By Betty Shannon

ASK dad about Frank Reade and his steam man that ran faster than a horse, and his scores of other mechanical devices which gave him control over land, sea, air, and bloodthirsty cowboys and Indians. Father got acquainted with Frank in the privacy of the back lot, for indiscriminating parents were apt to class him with dime-novel heroes and chuck him in the fire.

History has proved, however, that the author of the Frank Reade stories was America's own Jules Verne. Witness before us the ancestors of the aeroplane, submarine, tank and motor-truck, which father thrilled over in his boyhood and has lived to see come true.

Lu Senarens, now editor of nine publications, was the "Noname" who wrote the Frank Reade stories. It was after the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876, where the steam contraptions on exhibition fired his imagination. The first tale was of a steam man, nine feet tall, who took the young hero on a marvelous expedition. Senarens was only fourteen at the time.

He sent the manuscript, illustrated by himself, to Frank Tousey, the publisher. He got one hundred and fifty dollars for it and an order for a series. Mr. Tousey did not learn of the youth of his prize-fiction writer for five years.

Twenty years later, Senarens revised his original stories, and added new ones charged with storage-batteries. They were put out as the adventures of Frank Reade, Jr., son of the first Frank, and have since been reissued again. Mr. Senarens has spent his entire life in Brooklyn. And Brooklyn, you may recall, is a city noted for its peaceful homes.

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What A Young Man Should Know

By T. S. Stribling

This is Mr. Stribling's second appearance in EVERYBODY'S—each time in a story marked by a delightfully novel type of humor. Mr. Stribling is one of the very few people who can write understandingly about young folks in the terrifically serious years just before twenty, and this romance of Sim Toyne, aged seventeen, is as real as your own youth.

For a moment Sim Toyne stopped breathing to gaze at this vast fortune focused into a crimson flare which he could conceal in his palm.

SUCCESSFULLY to live down his seventeenth year, a boy should be equipped with a mother, a sister, a shotgun, a husky man friend, a wise altruistic girl friend and a watchful police.

At seventeen a boy's career teeters between the White House at Washington and a gray, rather somber house at Leavenworth. A push, a mere nudge at the right moment in the selected direction, is decisive.

Sim Toyne owned the dog and gun. He received his *pro rata* of police surveillance. Doll Breen was husky enough. Mrs. Breen, if not his real mother, had corrected the misdeal by long devotion. But when it came to a wise altruistic girl friend, Sim Toyne rocked along in the same boat with the other fifty-odd million American males.

Technically Mrs. Irene Petway was no longer a girl. Her title precluded that. Besides at twenty-four a woman is as set in life's mold as a man at thirty-six. However, if not a kitten, Mrs. Irene was kittenish. She practised her little pink claws on any available bit of masculine floss. During her work as dental assistant, every move she made for a man patient she freighted with a delicate personal significance.

Sim Toyne had first met her amid the antiseptic surroundings of a dental chair. She had been a cooling fragrance amid carbolic smells and roaring right-angled burrs. As Sim had writhed to escape the surgeon's misguided sense of humor (the fellow wore a certain fixed smile while he worked), his real fear had been not that the machine-shop in his mouth would result in a casualty, but that Mrs. Petway would cease holding a corner of the rubber dam and would retire into the inner office from which the humorist had called her.

But that was a long time ago—three weeks. Yet to-day, as the two strolled down Leadville's main street after office hours, Sim was still apprehensive lest she vanish. Very often when they walked like this she would disappear into some dry-goods store on an errand too delicate for masculine observation and he would have to wait outside; or she would fall in with some girl friend and they would talk to his utter neglect.

So to make the most of his fleeting opportunity, he reiterated earnestly:

"But Mizziz Petway, seventeen ain't a bit too young. In fact, Mizziz Petway, seventeen is the normal age to marry. I read it in a book. The book said the happiest marriages was contracted early——"

"And cured early?"

"Huh?"

"Nothing—go ahead."

"Well—you want our marriage to be happy, don't you, Mizziz Petway?"

"I don't know." Mrs. Petway smoothed the gray suède on her little finger and glanced up at him. "I shouldn't care for a strange or fantastic married life, Mr. Toyne."

THE hobbledehoy stared down at her blankly. "Why, Mizziz Petway—don't you *want* to be hap— Oh! Do ye mean they ain't no happy mar— Mizziz Petway, what do you mean?"

Mrs. Irene looked up at his flushed face and shining eyes— "Oh, nothing! It was a joke."

"That's a mighty solemn thing to joke about, Mizziz Petway—you—you are not cynical, are you, Mizziz Petway?"

"No. I'm divorced now."

Sim spent a moment on this, but decided that it meant nothing, mere girlish chatter, disconnected. So he proceeded to strike deep intellectual chords:

"Well, I'm glad you ain't cynical, Mizziz Petway. Won't do for a woman to be cynical—especially before marriage." He looked down at her. "But you've been married! That don't seem reasonable to me that you've been married. Seems like I must of dreamt it and it ain't so."

"It seems a bad dream to me, too, Sim," she answered soberly enough.

"Does it? Didn't he treat you nice, Mizziz Petway?"

Mrs. Irene slowly shook her glossy high-piled hair.

"Didn't he love you?"

"Not—just me—he—it seemed to me that he—." A certain tang entered the woman's soft voice. "Well, he knew so many women. He couldn't let a pretty girl pass without just staring at her. He——"

"If he hadn't of loved pretty girls, Mizziz Petway, he never would of married you."

Mrs. Irene turned and looked up at Sim with wide brown eyes. "Why, that's what he said!"

Sim drew a little breath of pleasure. He felt set up for having duplicated the absent Mr. Petway's mental processes.

And for some reason Mrs. Irene seemed to have yielded to a softer mood. She stared down Santa Cruz Street at nothing. Then she made up her mind, straightened her shoulders and laid a small finger on her companion's arm. "Sometimes I've thought, Sim, that the book you were telling me about is right. That it's really best to marry young—especially men should marry young, Sim—fellows like you, before—well, before they know such an awful lot about women—" she broke off and looked up at the boy earnestly, appraisingly.

A queer warm sensation swept over Sim. He felt himself admitted to an intimacy, a nearness, he had never known before. Then under her scrutiny, there crept into him an unhappy sense of deceit. His face reddened.

"But—uh—Mizziz Petway!" he blurted with the confessional instinct of lovers, "I—I think I ought to tell you something—you—you a-feeling that way—I—" He paused, staring at her with a hot face.

The woman looked back with widening eyes, as if an old enemy she had long suspected suddenly had confronted her again. "Oh, Sim!" It was a gasp.

The hobbledehoy stammered on relentlessly: "I—I've read a good deal—I'm a great reader——"

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"Weh-ull?" A blank interrogation.

"Well, you know, I— I've been reading a book—a book about what every young fellow ought to know wh-when h-he—when he gets married." Sim swallowed.

Mrs. Irene nodded, miles at sea.

"And—and there's a good deal about w-women in that—" Sim ended breathless and brick red.

For two full seconds the quick-witted Mrs. Petway continued her uncomprehending stare. She saw he was through. Then, gradually, it began to dawn on her. Her lips twitched. She bit them. Suddenly she looked down Santa Cruz and pointed out a gang of urchins standing before a window. One very small boy was elevated to a larger lad's back for a better view of something inside. At that moment he tumbled off.

Mrs. Irene burst out laughing. "What funny boys!" she cried. "Let's go down there!" She took Sim's arm and started, rippling into paroxysms of laughter. "Look at him kick the big boy! L-Look!" she gasped between attacks. "How d-droll! What a comedy!" She fished a bit of lace from her bag and wiped her eyes. "Ex-excuse me, Mr.—Mr. T-Toyne, but I'm so amused at th-th-th' boys." She went off again.

Sim stared at the comedians around the window. Certainly seeing a small boy tumble off a large boy and kick at the large boy's legs in revenge was nothing new to him. But he didn't want to appear blasé—as he was—not at just this critical juncture. So he joined Mrs. Irene's infectious laugh—at the boys. And they walked up to the show-window having the best time possible.

THE attraction in the window of Goodloe's jewelry store was a large ruby set on blue velvet. Two brass shells, an English and an American flag were spaced so they led the eye to the jewel. In the corner of the window was an art card bearing this legend:

The gem on exhibition, known as the Rajah's Ruby, was mined in Ceylon for Bandomoy, the Rajah of Bhawalpur. It was purchased by the Sultan of Turkey for one of his favorites. Looted from the royal harem by the Young Turks, it was captured at the fall of Damascus by an English major under General Allenby.

Its value, like all the major gems, is undetermined and speculative. Experts estimate it from one and a half to three million dollars. At the present depreciation of money, these figures are perhaps too low.

Not for sale.

For a moment Sim Toyne stopped breathing to gaze at this vast fortune focused into a little crimson flare which he could conceal in his palm. It was amazing. But the next moment found him skeptical. No doubt it was glass. Yet even if it was glass its glow held him. He felt an impulse to go hang his chin over the bottom molding of the window with the rest of the boys and stare into its red heart; but the dignity of his position restrained him.

The boys were younger than Sim, ranging from nine to fourteen. As a kind of cocktail to the feast of the jewel, they stuck their tongues against the glass and peered through at a peculiar beef-steaky effect this produced in an interior mirror. Then they wiped everything clean with their coat sleeves and started anew. Sim was not too old to realize they were having a splendid time.

Mrs. Petway also was moved by the stone. "Isn't it a *beauty!*" Her accent was full of desire.

Sim turned to look at her. "Why, I guess it's glass."

Mrs. Irene confronted him. "No it isn't—it's paste."

"Isn't paste glass?"

THE urchins turned around and began a defensive chorus: "Naw, lady, that's reel! Look whut it's wuth, mom!" suggested a little negro, pointing at the placard with white eyes. "It's a ruby and b'longs to the Rager of Bawlly-pore!" shrilled a youngster in a soda cap. "Look at the sign! Look! There it is in the corner. You c'n read it yuhse'f!"

But Mrs. Irene considered the marvel from a broader outlook on life. "It's a replica," she explained, and at the tone of her voice all the tinier boys in the gang came closer with covert intentions of holding her fingers or skirt. "Rich folks keep their own gems in storage vaults and wear replicas just like that. It keeps their real jewels safe."

This was great news. The youngsters stared up at her. The little negro had possessed himself of one of her suède fingers and stood smelling her scented bag with undisguised satisfaction. The white boys took a more intellectual view of the phenomenon. "But look here," they shrilled, "ain't that wearing phony stuff? Do they fool anybody?"

Sim didn't exactly like to be mobbed out of his girl. "Anyway, it's cheap stuff in the window," he put in.

"Cheap stuff!" Apparently Mrs. Irene was more incensed than the boys. "I wish you'd try buying one little string of brilliants! Cheap stuff! Cheap! You'd see. Wish to goodness I had that one! I could just wa-a-arm in it! If I could only wear it!" She pressed her fingers against her breast where she would set the gem. "Isn't it a love!"

Sim was surprized at gesture and words. "Do you really want it that bad?"

Mrs. Irene gave a brief laugh, caught Sim's arm and started up the street. "Oh, yes I'm crazy about brilliants—especially rubies—they look so-o-o Oh, come ahead!"

"I didn't know you really cared for a thing in the world," said Sim blankly.

"Well, I do," she assured him.

"Wonder what it 'ud cost?" inquired Sim speculatively.

"Why it isn't for sale." Mrs. Irene's tone was almost tart with desire. "That shows it's the very finest class stuff, and it's a replica, that's what gets me—a replica. Somewhere, Sim, a great big ruby, exactly like that one, is lying in some queen's or princess's jewel-box— "

"But what's it worth!" pressed Sim, mentally running over his resources.

"It's not for *sale*— Oh, five thousand!"

Sim's sudden hopes of a great financial sacrifice melted. It left his pulse whispering in his ear, "I wish I could get it for you," he said humbly.

"Oh boy!" Mrs. Petway began to laugh to make up for her curtness.

"I bet you'd marry me quick enough then."

"Kid, I'd marry the original Mr. Petway over again if he showed up with a dream like that in his mit—much less you," she tacked on thoughtfully.

"Why, Mizziz Petway!" cried the moralist, shocked again, "you wouldn't sell yourself to a man you didn't love for a ruby, would you?"

"I'd love him."

"O-oh!" Sim drew a breath, somewhat relieved, somewhat jealous. "I was afraid you was about to get cynical again. You know I can't stand a cynical woman, Mizziz Petway. It's all right for us men, being cynical is. We got to go up against the cold, hard world, Mizziz Petway, but a woman—uh—uh—something wrong—I read that in that book."

"That must be a good book," said the woman rather sharply, "an informing book. If you could just find some plan outlined in that book how to get that ruby, you would also find out how to get a wife, and surely that's something every young man should know."

"Look here, Mizziz Petway!" blurted the youth, "is that straight goods?"

"As straight as I ever put out."

Sim accepted the reply at its face value. "And you'll marry me if I get it?"

"I most certainly will, Mr. Toyne," she asseverated, looking curiously at the youngster. "Mr. Toyne, I will marry, marry, marry you—I will certainly marry you, if you get that stone."

"Then we're engaged!" cried Sim tremulously. "Will you—uh—shake hands on it?"

Mrs. Petway's gravity was barely controlled as she put her little gloved hand into Sim's palm. The ardor of his grip hurt her knuckles. An impulse to give him a kiss crossed her mind, but she suppressed it.

"And it don't make any difference how I get it?" he beamed down on her.

By this time they had reached forty-two Guadelupe Prospect, a street of melancholy third-rate boarding-houses. They paused.

"MR. TOYNE, it isn't my idea of a wife's duty to inquire into the business affairs of her husband. He gets the money, she never knows how; she spends it, he never knows how. And now," she pressed his fingers warmly, "good-by, and take care of yourself, because, remember, *I* have an interest in you now, Sim." She shook her finger at him and walked up the stoop, looking back at him. She applied her pass-key and opened the door, still looking at the boy with smiling lips and speculative eyes. Then she blew him a kiss—the kiss—from her glove, called, "See you to-morrow," and the door closed.

Sim stared at the blistered shutter with a strong pulse throbbing in his temple. He was trembling violently. He was engaged. He looked up and down Guadelupe Prospect. A dying tree or two struggled for life in the little square brick compounds along the thoroughfare.

Its drabness looked like a burst of sunlit wood to Sim. He felt an impulse to run whooping down the street, but only jumped off the stoop and started walking rapidly. His bliss was almost in his arms. All he lacked was a five-thousand-dollar

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The little bald-headed grocer's eyes popped at such an extraordinary conversation.

imitation ruby. The pulse in his temple became violent.

As he passed a corner grocery that purveyed to the neighborhood, a sudden plan popped into his head. He dashed inside and asked the use of the phone.

The grocer, a little bald-headed man counting eggs, nodded toward the instrument. Sim rushed over, called a number, rang two more unnecessary rings, snapped central, before a woman's voice spoke in his ear.

"This is Sim Toyne, Mizziz McGillicuddy. I want Lengthy—I mean Peter—Peter McGillicuddy. Oh, yes, I'm in a rush. Please let him finish later—yes."

A pause ensued; rapidly grew unbearable. Sim scratched his shin with the inner edge of his shoesole. He was about to ring again to see if he still had connection when Peter's wobbly bass opened on his ear.

"This is Sim, Peter—Sim—*Sim Toyne!* Say, Central, kain't you give a feller good connection so he won't have to bawl? Say, Peter—graveyard——"

Came a blank purring over the wire, then Peter's voice, metallic, deep, far-away, but still registering its blankness: "What did you say?"

"GEEMENY Crimeny, Peter, what you got stuffed in yore years? Graveyard—*graveyard!*" He was shouting it.

"O-o-oh, *graveyard!*"

"Godfrey's Cordial, yes, GRAVEYARD!"

The little bald-headed grocer's eyes popped at such an extraordinary conversation.

Be it known that this conversation was not so entirely without cogency as it sounded. The word "graveyard" was a secret password between the two boys denoting a call for help in the direst extremity. They had sworn with the terrificest oaths never to fail, never to betray, never to delay when summoned by this enigmatic vocable.

They had chosen it because it could be worked into ordinary conversation without exciting undue attention; yet at the same time it was sufficiently striking to grasp the ears of initiates.

"Where'll I meet you?" gasped the far-away voice.

"At Doll Breen's—bring a brickbat!"

"Godfrey's Cor—" A click in the receiver told Sim that his comrade had hung up and was speeding toward the rendezvous.

The grocer, who was vaguely affronted that a boy should come in and howl "graveyard" over his wire, lost count of his eggs completely as Sim shot out the door.

The human embryo, it is said, reproduces every physical form assumed by its forebears from protozoa to primate; children, likewise, skim through a synopsis of the mental and moral development of mankind from pithecanthropus to profiteers.

A quaint and a curious thing is humanity's moral development. Taken by and large, the basis of all ethics, in every age, rests upon one question: In what mode is it best to steal in order that the strongest survive?

The answers have changed with the epochs. Wife-stealing gave way to alienation of affections; the tomahawk falls before the coal strike; slave raiding succumbs to monopoly of production.

Our jails and penitentiaries are nothing more than selective groupings of men whose answer to this perennial query was out of date—it isn't done that way now; our palaces and mansions are selective groupings of other men who did not misplace the tense of their intents—more like this.

Adolescent seventeen is somewhere in the robber-knight period of civilization. The reason why boys of this age are not hanged is because ninety-nine per cent. of the robberies, murders, arsons and piracies they commit are mental. Seventeen is too brief to crowd into action such a plethora of violence.

It seems hardly worth while to suggest that these acts, done or undone, are not crimes at all, but responses to the highest moral impulses at that given stage. If any skeptic doubt that the boys who raid his watermelon-patch and break out his window-lights are not all heroes, let him catch one and by threat, bribe or torture try to make him tell who his pals were.

At four o'clock that afternoon, Mr. Sim Toyne sat in his attic bedroom, at a square table, making an India-ink drawing. His crow-quill was rusty and made a thin whisper at each stroke. Peter McGillicuddy stood watching Sim with his head and shoulders bent to conform to the slope of the attic roof.

Shoved into corners and crevices, and filling the embrasure of the little dormer window that gave Sim light for his draftsmanship, were tennis-rackets, bats, hockey sticks, a shotgun, and a revolver, rusted stiff.

The air was stuffy with the smell of bird-skins which Sim had tried to mount, of photographic chemicals, of the neglected beginnings of a butterfly collection that moldered in one corner in a small dry-goods box topped with a window-pane.

These signs of restless boyish activity, groping out into every available channel in an endeavor to acquaint itself with this bewilderment called Life, held a kind of mute appeal for sympathy.

Sim did his work on some yellowed drafting paper which he had bought during a spasm of civil engineering. Now he handled the India ink not altogether unskilfully.

"See this 'X,' Lengthy?" Sim made one. "There's where we meet at midnight."

McGillicuddy nodded solemnly.

Sim handed the plat to his satellite, "We meet right at this 'X' when the fire-station clock points twelve. Did you ever read 'The Blood of a Corsican?' "

"No, have you got it?" asked Peter eagerly.

"NO, THE boys wore it out reading it. What I wanted to tell you was, you must get there *eggs*actly at twelve; not before, not after. In 'The Blood of a Corsican,' Orsino, that's the feller who really done the murders, and believe me, Lengthy, he was a noble character, Orsino says: 'You are just as unpunctual to get to a place five minutes ahead of time as five minutes behind time; neither one is on time.' "

"Gee—I never thought of that before."

"Well, you must think of it. In *our* profession, Lengthy, a fellow mustn't loiter around waiting for nobody. It would draw suspicion on both of 'em."

The tall boy became silent again and stationary, with shoulder and head tilted parallel to the rafter.

The plat Peter received was merely a rough sketch of Leadville showing the location of Goodloe's jewelry store. It was territory which had been strange and uncharted to Peter only once in his life, when at the age of four he ran away from his mother.

"And Lengthy, if anything happens to you—if you get caught or anything—you want to remember this map, and eat it."

"Eat it!"

"Sure you eat it! That destroys it completely, doesn't it? With the detectives right on you—you eat 'em."

"Looks like they'd print 'em on crackers, or something——"

"Aw Geemeny Christmas!" Sim rose in brisk disgust. "Well, the next point is to wrap up that brick to smash the window."

"Look here, Shorty," said Peter, coming to life, "I've been thinking about smashing that window—that's giving old man Goodloe a pretty rotten deal, Shorty—bustin' out his big plate-glass window. Old man Goodloe's been pretty decent to us, Shorty, the time our baseball busted out one of his little windows—when we were kids."

Sim scratched his head. "I'd thought of that, too." The burglar stared unseeingly at the [illegible] which had lain on his

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Mike gave his night-stick a kind of flirt that sent it spinning to the end of its thong, then a jerk, which continued the spin, but restored it to his hand.

window-shelf ever since the foregoing summer in the fading hope that they would turn into butterflies. "Tell you what I b'lieve I'll do, Lengthy. When—er—me and her are a good safe way down in Mexico, I think I'll send old man Goodloe a check, in disguised handwriting, to pay for his window—I don't want old man Goodloe to lose nothing on this deal."

"Sure not."

"If that was *his* ruby, you know, Lengthy, I'd rather lose *her* than touch it, but when it's a mere traveling exhibition of Fine Arts or something——"

"Sure, sure," nodded Peter, understanding perfectly. Some moral scruple of the big fellow seemed relieved. He moved out into the center of the room where the roof permitted him to stand almost erect.

"And say, Lengthy," went on Sim, also brightened by this straightening of a matter of conscience, "you're in half on this."

Peter stared. "Half—what you mean?"

"Why I mean half that ruby's yours."

The huge boy appeared shocked. "Half of five thousand dollars!"

"I bet it's nearer ten thousand!" declared Sim optimistically.

Both sums were so huge that they appeared practically the same viewed from the chronic penury of boyhood. One-half of infinity equals infinity.

THEN McGillicuddy's own spirit of self-sacrifice leaped up.

"Why, naw! Geemenettic naw! I wouldn't think of it. I ain't about to get married. I'm just helping you as a friend!"

Sim got up. "Now look here, Lengthy, half of that ruby's *yours!* No back talk. What kind of a fellow do you think I am, eh, Lengthy—what kind of a chap d'you take me for?"

Peter moistened his lips. Both boys were quivering at this emotional crescendo.

"But, Sim," objected the tall boy with a sudden inspiration toward martyrdom, "that kain't be. Your girl gets it. We can't divide it."

Sim's face changed. "Sure—sure. Irene gets it. He kept forgetting Irene at intervals. "Well, now look here, Lengthy, if *ever* I *can* do anything for you, s'long as I'm above ground, Lengthy, call on me—for *anything*. I'm yours till Niagara Falls——"

"Oh it's nothing—nothing—" brushed aside Peter gruffly, very uncomfortable under such stress—— "nothing a tall. Now lemme see. We want some padding to go around this brick——"

"Sure!" Sim moved to the door, also glad of the relief. He opened it and called lustily down-stairs: "Mrs. Breen! Oh, Mrs. Breen!"

When a woman's voice sang up from below, he continued:

"Send me a tow sack, up by Adele, please, Mrs. Breen!"

Instantly a shrill, angry, child's voice protested from somewhere that she was reading and could not be disturbed.

"Come along, Adele, be polite," admonished the woman's voice.

"Aw, you don't have to be polite at home!" exploded the child shrilly.

"Adele, dear, how often have I explained to you——?"

"Politeness happens too often at home!" shrieked Adele, "and Sim Toyne—" a pause, then a directing of Adele's voice atticward, "What are you going to do with that tow sack, Sim Toyne?"

"Don't worry, Adele," called down Sim hastily, then lifting his vocal pitch. "I'll come down and get it myself, Mrs. Breen!"

"No, I'll go!" A sudden clattering below told him that Adele was already sprinting kitchenward.

This shift disturbed Sim. He stepped back into his attic. "I wish I hadn't called that brat," he said to Peter, as he hastily replaced some half-dozen things on the table to restore its ordinary appearance.

Almost in no time Adele came flying up the stairs with the sack in one hand and the book she had been reading held in the other, with a small forefinger marking her place. She kicked the door open and danced in like a dash of sunlight.

"Why, hello, Peter—I didn't know you were here."

"Hello, Adele!"

"What do you want with the sack, Sim?" She tossed it down and blew some flakes of bran from her fingers.

"Oh—an experiment."

"What sort of an experiment?"

Sim's attic was stuffed with relics of experiments, but to save his secret he could think of no possible experiment calling for a tow sack.

"Oh, I don't know, Adele, till I try it."

It was Sim's misfortune continually to underestimate Adele's mental resources.

"Wha-a-at! Don't know what you're going to do with it—how did you know you wanted a tow sack?"

An anecdote Sim had once heard gave him a loophole.

"Why, didn't you ever hear of Thomas A. Edison, Adele?" he asked brightly. "Edison never started experimenting until he had ever'thing, simply ever'thing. He would give fifty dollars to anybody who could just mention anything he didn't have. And a girl—about your size—won his fifty. Guess what she mentioned?"

"Don't know—what's that brick for?"

Sim's Edison effort had exhausted him. The best he could do was to spar for time by looking in the wrong direction and saying, "What brick?"

"Why that one on the table." She pointed very definitely.

"Oh—that brick. Lengthy brought it up here."

"What for?"

"Geemeny Crimeny, Adele, there the gentleman stands, you can ask him for yourself." A gentle perspiration broke out on Sim's forehead.

"DIDN'T he bring it up to you?"

"It's a sample brick," put in Peter's bass.

"Sample of what?"

"Oh Godfrey's Cordial, Adele, it's a sample of some more bricks that's just like that brick!"

"What book you reading, Adele?" interposed Peter paternally.

"Slest, scobblers daughter-r starvinfluv. Who's going to buy bricks, Peter?"

"What did you say the name of that book was?" demanded Sim irritably.

"Celes*tee*—the—Cobbler's—Daughter—or—Starving—for—Love!" She spaced it wrathfully. "What's the matter with your ears, Sim Toyne—full of wax?"

Sim straightened. He had a strangle hold. "Adele Breen, I'm going to tell your mother what you said."

Adele switched uncomfortably. "Huh, I don't care; and I'll tell her you are going to do something with a brick and a sack you don't want her to know, too—that's what I'll do, Mister Sim Toyne!" She bent forward and waggled a pink finger at his face.

"Huh," Sim shrugged without conviction, "we don't care."

Adele opened her blue eyes wide. "Oh, you're both in it! Oh, you're both in it! Oh! Oh! Oh! I knew it was something bad! Oh!"

She danced up and down, clapping her hands, with triumph and curiosity and horror queerly mixed in her face and tones.

Sim clutched after a non-existent nonchalance. "Ho, listen at that kid—just because we've got a brick and a sack—Ho, listen to her!"

"I'll find out from mama what you can

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do with a brick and a sack!" cried Adele. "I'll ask daddy! I'll ask the garbage man! I'll find out! I'll find out! I'll find out!"

She danced about the attic as if possessed by forty little devils of betrayal, then bounced out the door, bounced down the steps, still chanting, "I'll find out! I'll find out!"

The two boys stared at each other. Then by common impulse rushed to the top landing and craned over.

"Adele! Adele! Come back up here!"

Adele came flying back, her little forefinger still marking her place in the amorous exigencies of "Celeste, the Cobbler's Daughter." As she came running up the steps, she looked continually into their faces, giving them no time at all for a conference.

SIM plunged, "Adele—you mustn't tell this!"

"Oh, no!" she removed her right forefinger from Celeste, substituted her left and with her right crossed her flat little chest.

"Well—we—we're going to kill some puppies and—throw 'em away—in this sack."

"Who-weeeee! Sim Toyne, you're not going to do any such terrible thing!"

"Yes, we are!" asseverated Sim, not knowing whether this shriek implied distrust of truthfulness or moral condemnation.

"Whose little puppies? Oh, the poor little things—whose?"

Sim groped in his head for a name. There are some thirty thousand population in Leadville, with most of whom Sim was acquainted, but to save his soul, the only name he could think of was Mr. Goodloe's. He gave it.

"What has Mr. Goodloe done to *you*?"

"Nothing to me—to a friend."

"Who?"

"You."

"Me-e-e!"

"Yes, you!"

"What?"

Sim cleared his throat. "I was in there one day—just me and him—we were in there together—in his store, I mean, and—er—you were going along the street, and—er—Mr. Goodloe said—he said—'What little yellow-headed pop-eyed brat is that anyway?'"

"Uh-bout ME!" screamed Adele.

"He sure said it," nodded Sim firmly. "He said you were meddlesome, and that you asked a thousand questions. Right then I thought, 'Old Goodloe, I'll git even with you for talking about the purtiest, sweetest little girl in Leadville in any such way—I'll kill your little old mean pups!' And I'm going to!"

Adele's eyes were brilliant at the affront. At that moment, Mr. Goodloe, the jeweler lost a friend, whom he was destined never to regain. A distaste for the kindly old man would linger in the heart of the grown-up Miss Breen long after she had forgot how it came to be planted there."

"Don't let a policeman catch you, Sim."

"We won't—don't you tell."

"I won't—do you need any more sacks?"

"No, this'll do—remember, not a word."

"Oh, I won't."

She turned and started down-stairs. "How many are there?"

"Six."

"I wish there was a *dozen!*"

Sim and Peter turned back into the attic with long breaths of relief. Quite accidentally, Sim had stumbled upon a very helpful bit of information about women; one that every young man should know.

When Peter McGillicuddy went home, Sim Toyne spent the remainer of the afternoon making ready to leave the attic where he had lived and wondered since he was twelve years old. As he went about, the stuffy little room stood out with a new dearness as if he had never seen it before. And there was Doll, Mrs. Breen, and Adele. He could hardly imagine his life going on without those three. But he was giving them all up for a ruby and a woman.

Thought of the woman picked Sim's spirits up. The remainder of his life would be an endless basking in Mrs. Petway's smiles. However, his joy would be bitten by the secret of how he obtained the ruby.

Instantly he fancied himself a sort of Byronesque hero, leading a proud but remorseful life in some Mexican castle, rich, envied, but feared. Through it all, he would keep a gloomy watch over the sunny innocence of Mrs. Petway.

He could see her tripping to him through the castle halls with a nosegay; and after a little attempt to please him, she would sigh and say,

"Mr. Toyne—why is it that you never smile?"

And he would kiss her tenderly on the hair and say, "Leave me now, little one, I have other things to think of."

The prospect of such hopeless remorse filled Sim with a shivering ecstasy. He would be a marked man. . . .

There must be hundreds of poets in our state penitentiaries.

Down-stairs a clock began to strike six, but was drowned in a chorus of hoarse whistles from furnaces, smelters and reduction plants. Through his dormer window, Sim saw Mount Massive turn russet against a green sky of infinite depth. The air grew cold by swift gradations. Between the bats of Sim's eyes, the street lights winked into brilliance and formally ended the day.

At half-past six, Adele came to the attic door and told Sim supper was ready. She delivered her message in a frightened voice, quite unlike the usual possessive Adele.

Sim said he was not hungry.

Adele stood in the doorway a moment, her hair a blur of gold in the shadows. She breathed in long audible sighs. Presently, in a good imitation of her mother's accents, she cadenced, "Oh, dear me, what is this world coming to?" and took her troubled little self down-stairs again.

Sim got briskly into action. He switched on his study light, picked up his padded brick and crammed it into a pocket. He studied the effect in a dusty mirror, drew it out and put it under his coat. He moved his body this way and that scrutinizing the result. It left him unsatisfied. He drew it out and wrapped it in a newspaper. The parcel looked suspiciously like a brick wrapped in a newspaper. So he added an outer roll of drawing-paper and converted it into a big bundle of engineer's plans. Any one now would certainly mistake him for an architect going down-town for night work.

HE tucked the bundle under his arm, took a last look about his attic, at his butterflies, a rough star-map, an embryonic wireless outfit, a boy-made easel for amateur oil painting. Sim drew a melancholy breath, much as Adele had done, blinked out his light and tiptoed down-stairs.

A few minutes later, Sim moved down Bonanza street with his cap over his eyes and his brick under his arm.

He walked nervously. The monotony of design gave him the impression that he was skirting a line of hostile forts.

The shouts of a group of children bursting out of one house and scooting across the lawn to another startled Sim like the sortie of an enemy. Down one yard came a dog under full lung power. It lined up alongside Sim just inside the fence, raving,

"And where did ye come fr-rom, ye poor-r-r lit-t-tle darlin'?"

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offering to chew the boy to bits if he would only step inside.

Ordinarily, Sim would have stopped and by whistles and cooing, and by tentative offers of his hand, he would have reminded the brute that, a long time ago, an epoch or two, say in the Devonian age, the dog's forebears and Sim's forebears made a firm alliance against all the other animals of the globe, and from that good day, dog and man have been comrades and lovers. But to-night Sim quickened his pace and was glad when an ornamental cross-fence cut off this condemnation.

A whisper out of the shadows of some elms gave the fugitive another turn until he recognized the voice of Peter McGillicuddy. Peter was saying,

"Ain't the dogs bad to-night, Sim?"

A moment later Peter's big form materialized out of the darkness. The presence of his comrade reassured Sim. He did not chide the big fellow for unpunctual earliness, although it was condemned by Orsino, that philosopher ennobled by many murders.

"Sure are."

"Wonder what's got into 'em?"

"Instinct. A dog can tell a bad man, Lengthy, every pop—dogs and babies."

"Pshaw, how can they tell it?"

"By telegraphy."

"Telegraphy?"

"Sure. Telegraphy is to be very sensitive and to get in report with somebody. Then every thing they think is telegraphed right into your brain."

"Geewhillikins—that 'ud be grand in poker!"

"It wouldn't work in poker. Your heart's got to be pure, and you got to breathe through your backbone."

"Backbone—say, you're kiddin'."

"No. I got a book about it at home—Rager Yoger. If I hadn't decided to go into this robber business, I was thinking of taking it up. You keep your heart spotless and free from desire, and you get to be a divine healer—" and Sim could see himself moving about in long travel-stained robes, extending a hand, curing the ills of the world, impassible to all wrath or envy or greed or lust—a marked man. A shiver of desire for this sort of life trickled through him.

PETER stared down at him, "Breathing through your backbone—" suddenly he broke into an immense roaring laugh that rocked the street, "Well, I be jimswizzled, Shorty—breathing through your backbone!" he roared again.

Peter's mirth offended Sim deeply, and somehow, in the darkness, the tall boy sensed it at once, without a word said or a movement made. So he left off laughing at telepathy as abruptly as he began and walked along in discomfort. Presently in a different tone, he asked the hour. Sim drew a big nickel watch, maneuvered it into a beam from the street lamp, "Quarter till nine."

Both slowed down a trifle in order not to arrive too early at the scene of the robbery. The two meandered on for a distance with a painful sense of separation. Peter wanted to apologize for his laughter, and after a while Sim felt this fact and the sense of tension slowly eased in their hearts. It made them meltingly confidential.

Sim said, "Lengthy, I ain't got a friend in the world I can trust now but you. I want you to promise me just one thing."

"Sure, sure," the tall boy was affected.

"If anything happens, Lengthy—if anything should happen——"

"Yes——"

"I want to be buried with my revolver in my right hand, layin' across my chest, Lengthy——"

"Godfrey's Cordial!" Intense admiration. Sim was now getting back to where Peter's admiration functioned.

SHIVERS of an artist's creative impulse moved Sim to further post mortem details.

"And, Lengthy, I don't want my hair brushed at all, just run your fingers through it, and buy me a red cravat, and have my pistol laying kinder slanting up across my chest."

Tears of a profound and melancholy enjoyment blurred the stars for Sim. After all, his chosen profession promised rewards as exquisite as divine healing.

"If they get me you fix me that way, too," said Peter.

"All right," murmured Sim remotely.

A pattering of footsteps behind them startled the robbers into sudden flight. As they legged it along the elm-darkened sidewalk, a sharp voice on the verge of tears shrilled out:

"Now, you wait for me, Sim Toyne! I'm scared! You wait!"

Sim's diaphragm gave a spasm. He would much have preferred detectives. He slackened his gait.

"Gee-e-rusalum—Adele's followed us!"

"What!" Peter was as deeply shocked.

"That's her!"

"Le's run off'n leave her!"

"N-no—we kain't. She'd foller and foller and git lost."

"Well, don't this beat hallelujah!"

Both boys stopped, staring back up the pavement in dismay. They could see Adele's small pursuing figure darting through splotches of light, a mere flutter of skirts and a glint of hair.

"I s-swan!" groaned Peter as he watched her coming.

But Sim girded on his moral arms to repel boarders. As Adele flitted up, breathless, he said solemnly, "Adele, you'll haff to go back."

The child came to a dead stop, amazed at this reception.

"Why, Sim?"

"You kain't go with us, that's all."

"Kain't I see the little dogs killed?" she quavered.

"No—little girls mustn't see little dogs killed."

Adele stood her ground, staring up at Sim through the gloom, "You aren't my mother, Sim Toyne."

"Whether I'm your mother or not, you're not going——"

"Sim—pullease——"

The boy remained cold and unresponsive.

When Adele saw that begging was not going to work, she snapped into a sudden temper.

"Can if I will and will if I want to!"

"Adele Breen, you are not going to follow us to-night!"

The pronunciation of her full name, the cold correctness of Sim's grammar, daunted the little girl.

"Si-Sim, I couldn't go to s-sleep in my bed, S-Sim. And it scares me to lie awake, S-Sim," pleaded Adele tearfully. "Slim, pullease let me go with you so I won't be scared, Sim, pullease, Sim——"

Sim was thawing, melting, abominably. His arms ached to grab up the little girl, to kiss her fright away and let her go, but he couldn't. He had to hold his front lines. "No, if you're afraid to lie awake in your bed, you can walk around town till you get sleepy—but you kain't foller us!"

With this helpful advice, Sim turned stiffly and moved off down the street.

Instantly there was uproar behind him. Adele screamed, flung out her arms like a football tackle and rushed full tilt, head on, into the ornamental iron fence. The bump rattled the railings and genuine pain colored Adele's shrieks.

Sim whirled. Adele was butting her golden head against the railings. Sim ran back. "Quit it!" he yelled. "Stop it, you little ignoramus!" He caught her hands and jerked her away from her self-torture. "Shut up! You can go!"

He stood with her, completely nonplussed what to do next.

"Oh, Adele," he groaned, "what makes you such a bad little girl?"

"God," sniffed Adele, on the authority of the Sunday-school. She rubbed her head with one hand and possessed herself of Sim's fingers with the other.

Sim let her have them. Through that human impulse to keep on trying to do a task when all hope is lost, the trio continued down the street toward the scene of the robbery.

THE police of Leadville, and of all other cities in general, have a reputation for sleeping on their beats, for loafing in all-night groceries, and for dependable absenteeism when lawlessness is afoot. These ideas are fostered by the movies, vaudeville sketches and Sherlock Holmes tales. The reason why the police are kept very much in the background of such works is because the inopportune appearance of a cop in the front pages of our picaresque novels would have ruined many a fine romance.

Sim Toyne subscribed to these articles of faith. Therefore when the hobbledehoy peered around Wilson's grocery at the junction of Bonanza and Santa Cruz he was amazed to see Mike Callahan, whom he knew very well, patrolling back and forth in front of Goodloe's jewelry-store. The three crept into the concealing shadow of some banana cases and squatted, looking at Mike.

Mike walked back and forth at a leisurely pace. At the end of his beat he gave his night-stick a kind of flirt that sent it spinning to the end of its thong, then a jerk, which continued the spin, but restored it to his hand. Sim determined some day to borrow Mike's stick and try it.

Adele did not have to stoop much. She leaned against Sim and yawned luxuriously. She was the only one at ease and comfortable.

"Getting sleepy, Adele?" asked Sim hopefully.

"No-o-o," Adele yawned again, stretched up her arms, pulled gently at Sim's hair and ears, and relapsed into her glassy-eyed watching of Mike.

The policeman came and went and dangled his club with automaton-like regularity. His footsteps approached out of darkness; then he appeared, came quite close to their corner, twirled his club, and finally melted softly into the gloom

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He started off swiftly. His overcoat snapped behind him and the boys sometimes had to trot to keep up.

again. When Mike was at the farther end of his beat, they could not hear him. Then Santa Cruz street lay before them in silence splotched with street lights. It seemed waiting—ready to leap at something. If everything had begun to rumble and move about, it would not have surprised the adolescents. Perhaps their brains still held residual impressions of the earth when it was young and plastic, as they were now; when earthquakes and cataclysms crouched behind every transient immobility.

A belated pedestrian came hurrying by. The sound of his footsteps carried a long way through the night. Somewhere a cock began crowing. It stirred up others. There were cocks everywhere. They crowed in a score of different keys, with strange individual inflections.

"Gee!" groaned Peter, shifting his cramped position with pain, "how do other fellows get in to—er—kill little dogs?"

Adele was leaning hard on Sim. Her head pushed in between the boy's shoulder and chin. She had thrust an arm over the top button of Sim's coat, and now much of her weight hung on the button from her armpit. Something like a hook in Adele's hip cut into Sim's thigh and slowly produced numbness. Hanging like this the little girl enjoyed a dewy slumber.

"She's asleep," said Sim. "Talk anyway you want to."

"How do other fellows rob jewelry-stores, if a cop prances up and down all night long?" Peter seemed aggrieved.

SIM suppressed a yawn. "O-oh, they cut tunnels—or wait for a stroke of luck, like we're doing."

Peter eased an aching leg. "I say, Shorty—you're fonder of married life than I'd be."

That recalled to Sim why he had come. He immediately roused and grew dithyrambic. "Lengthy, it's love—you don't know what love is, Lengthy. Just for a smile from her, Lengthy, I'd wade into fire, drink boiling lead—God knows I wish her house would get on fire so I could run in and—Geeminy!"

For at that moment Adele's hooks gave way and she plumped down on the ground. She started a sleepy crying, but Sim leaned over, picked her up, petted her, told her not to cry, and asked if she didn't want to go home.

Adele became sufficiently awake to admit she preferred home.

Sim stood her off at arms' length as she rubbed her eyes. "Well—can you find your way back home?"

Adele blinked about without a notion of where she was. At that moment she saw Mike Callahan appearing out of the shadows. She wriggled out of Sim's hands. "I'll make Mr. Callahan carry me home," she yawned, "then you can go on and kill the puppies." She yawned again. "Leave one," she directed, through some freak of generosity; then before Sim could collect his wits, or move to stop her at all, she started trotting after the policeman, calling: "Mr. Callahan! Oh, Mr. Callahan, wait for me—I'm scared——"

The amateur burglars held their breaths. Patrolman Callahan stared in the blankest astonishment at this fluffy little creature who had dropped out of nowhere onto his beat.

"Little gir-rl, and where did ye come fr-rom?"

Adele held up sleepy arms toward him. "I was stayin' all night wiv a little girl friend, Mister Callahan," she yawned and used the most babyish accent.

"Yis, darlin', and where was that?"

"I don't know, Mr. Callahan. I—I waked up, and I was *so* scared. But mama told me not to cry. And I didn't. But I wanted to go home. So I slipped out, but I didn't cry. Then a great big dog he barked at me. It was such a great big dog, Mr. Callahan——"

"Yis, darlin'——"

"And I run and run and run and run—and then I saw you——"

The blue Samson squatted on the balls of his feet to receive the Delilah in his arms. "Ye poor-r, br-rave little darlin'," he crooned, as Adele adapted herself to the contour of his stomach, chest and shoulder, "and can ye raymimber ye're number and strate?"

"Five-two-six Bonanza," yawned Adele, turning in as obviously as if she had taken a berth on a Pullman.

And the Pullman moved off.

The two boys stared after the officer's broad back.

"Can you beat it?" gasped Peter.

"Lengthy," philosophized Sim gloomily, "they come into this world able to put it across——"

The burglars arose slowly from their cramped position and hobbled around to the front of Goodloe's jewelry-store.

Goodloe's show-window was a big plate-glass front, flanked by a tall narrow-glass side; and this side formed part of the alcove of the doorway.

The boys walked quickly down the pavement and stepped into the alcove where they were concealed from the sweep of the street. The arc light on the corner played over their retreat with a hard purplish glare and blanched everything in the show-window, ruby and all.

The moment Sim actually was on the scene of the robbery, nervousness seized him. The dreamy glory of the affair was nailed hard and fast to this harshly lighted doorway. A sense of wrong-doing seized him—the first that had crossed his mind. His hand shook so he could hardly remove the papers from the brick.

Finally he got them off and looked around. "See anybody, Lengthy?" he whispered out of a dry mouth.

Peter stuck his head out of the alcove and peered up and down. "Nobody at all," he whispered.

Sim was queerly disappointed. His heart sank. He wanted to quit his job—if Peter had not been there. "Say, Peter," he whispered suddenly, "we can't do this unless we paste strips of paper over the glass——"

"SURE we can," returned McGillicuddy phlegmatically. "You're thinking about pasting strips of paper over the windows in Paris so the shock from the German shells *wouldn't* break 'em."

"Yeh—that's a fact," admitted Sim desperately.

"Hit it!" said Peter.

Sim had to now. If he stopped now, Peter would never look up to him again.

"Hit it!"

Sim was shuddering as if with an ague. He swung his brick against the heavy glass. It drummed, rebounded, and left the pane intact.

"Hit it! Smash it hard!" rushed Peter, suddenly catching the excitement. "That cop'll be back in a minute!"

Sim drew back for a desperate swing. At that moment the door flew open and a smallish man shot out onto the burglars. One of his fists caught Sim in the ear. A mighty gong roared through the boy's head. He slumped against the side of the alcove. Peter McGillicuddy turned and dived at their assailant. It was too high a tackle. Both drove through the doorway and smashed down on the floor inside. With a shock, Sim saw his big friend had been twisted underneath during the fall, and the smash had been Peter's head against the flooring. Sim saw a blur of swinging arms and flying fists in the hard light. He heaved up from the wall and lunged into the mêlée.

As he dived, a foot smashed Sim on the chest and stopped his breathing. But the boy flung his arms around it, froze to it. The foot shook Sim back and forth, so the youngster's head snapped to and fro, and the jewelry-store seemed to jiggle in every direction. With a gasp and a wrench, Sim twisted his body to one side of that terrible foot and flung himself into the little man's crotch. He wriggled within

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range of the head and began a furious bastinado with clenched fists. At every lick the head bobbed down.

"Leggo Lengthy! Turn Lengthy loose!" he shrieked at the owner of the head. "Leggo Lengthy—" for Lengthy was making queer stertorous noises. "Leggo—O-o-oh-eee!"

Sim's voice shot up in a scream of pain from a sudden crushing of his stomach. In the midst of his hammering the little iron man had locked his feet behind Sim, straightened his legs and was now squeezing the life out of the boy with a crotch hold. Sim felt as if hot packing were being forced into his chest. The hard purplish light twinkled red. The boy writhed upward, screaming. He pushed desperately at the small of the man's back, screaming, trying to lift his body from this hot, tearing constriction.

His breath was going. "Stop! Stop!" he croaked from the top of his lungs, "O-oh—God—Stop!" He flapped down prone on the terrible little man's back, and patted his shoulder—that ancient signal of defeat in the wrestling ring.

Perhaps the defender of Goodloe's store had once been a wrestler. At any rate the pressure relaxed somewhat on Sim's tortured bowels.

"Got enough?" asked a voice not even out of breath.

"U-ugh—more'n enough——"

"You young devils!"

The three lay motionless on the floor. Peter's breathing also sounded a little easier. However, the boys knew that the python into whose coils they had fallen was ready to resume pressure at an instant's notice. Then the eternal admiration of boy for man bubbled up in Sim:

"Gee, mister—what a crotch holt you got!"

Their captor made no reply to this, but suddenly released both boys and got to his feet before they could stir from the floor.

"Stay where you are," he directed.

They stayed, but Peter gargled as if from a very sore throat, "Gan we sed ub?"

"Set up!"

They did and looked at the fellow. Sim could but reflect in amazement that he was certainly a little man to overcome two such huskies as they.

THE protector of Goodloe's jewelry-store seemed to be lost in meditation. Finally he snapped: "What's behind this—a gang of kid sneak-thieves?"

Sim straightened where he sat. "No!" indignantly, "we're not—not by a hell of a lot! I—I was doing this for a—a—a—friend——"

"Warm friendship!"

"It's a—a—lady friend," blurted out Sim, growing a darker hue in the purplish light.

"O-o-oh——"

Something in the little man's long-drawn "Oh!" made Sim very uncomfortable.

"Do you realize I could send you both to the pen for this?"

"We wasn't doing nothing but standing in the alcove," grumbled Peter, "and you jumped out and beat us up."

"You brought that brick along, I suppose, to drum tunes on windows—and sing, perhaps?"

"I won't tell you no lie," said Sim. "We were going to break in."

"You astonish me."

"Well—we was."

"What did your lady friend want," pursued the questioner curiously, "that she should send you on such a dubious errand?"

"Why, Godfrey's Cordial, man!" cried Sim greatly surprised. "She wanted the replicker, of course!"

The man was surprised in his turn. "Replica—of what?"

"The ruby—the Rajah's ruby!"

THE little fellow backed to the counter, pulled himself up backward into a sitting posture and broke into an amazed laugh. "So that's what you thought—replica of a jewel—they think more damn things! That was one hell of a stroke you were about to pull—steal a replica—" Here he went into full mirth. "Well, I be damn!"

"What's the matter with swiping a replica for a lady just about crazy about it?" demanded Sim, vaguely affronted.

"Why, I'll give it to you, if it's for a skirt!" cried the little man in a kind of indignation and disgust. "Lord! I know how the woman hunch feels—if you'd come to me in the first place—" he jumped off the counter and started forward to the window.

"Give me the replica?" gasped Sim, springing up and following, "a twelve-thousand-dollar replica——"

"Replica, hell—I got a half-bushel of 'em. Bought 'em at auction in Frisco—off that old tower of jewels they tore down." He glanced around at them. "Say, don't you fellows mention that till I get out of town. Folks thinks different things about my rubies, but none of 'em don't think nothing as cheap as it is."

The boys gasped a chorus, "No, no!" "Geemenettie, no!" "Say, Shorty, this makes it easy sailin' for you, don't it!" "Well, if I'd only of known——"

Sim was utterly confounded at the outcome. It was his first revelation of the fundamental brummagem of life—imitations of replicas. Then the idealist in him weighed this left-over from the old Frisco Exhibition.

"Say—look here, Lengthy—I can't do that!"

"Kain't do what?"

"Give her that."

"Why-y-y!"

"That book of mine says a man kain't have a happy married life based on deception. You kain't expect me to offer Mrs. Petway a phony imitation and try to pretend like it's a real imitation. You can't have no hap——"

The little man, who was leaning to get it, whirled so suddenly it stopped Sim in midsentence. "Mrs. Petway?"

"Yeh, Mrs. Irene Petway—she and me are going to marry——"

"Where she live?"

"Forty-two Guadelupe."

"Know the way?"

Peter began laughing. "Gee, he ought to—goes there every day."

"Then, comé 'on, le's go!" The little man was already running to the back end of the jewelry-store. He reappeared a moment later, shaking himself into his overcoat.

Something about the small athlete, a kind of inward boiling, reduced the boys to a complete and an apprehensive silence. They followed him out into the street. He slammed the door and locked it.

"Which way?"

They pointed simultaneously. He started off swiftly and the two trailed along at his heels. His overcoat snapped behind him and the boys sometimes had to trot to keep up. As he raced along he boiled out fragmentary sentences, mostly profanity.

"Damn fool—jealous as hell—knew she was somewhere in this damn town——"

He seemed so angry, so wrought upon; his voice shook so that neither of the hobbledehoys ventured any questions or observations other than to indicate the correct street turnings.

When Peter pointed out forty-two Guadelupe, the little man told them briefly that he could manage the rest of the way by himself. He left them at the corner, in front of the grocery-store as if they had been hitched.

BOTH boys strained their eyes after him as he grew indistinct in the shadows. They heard him clanging at the door-bell as if forty-two were on fire. Came a long wait.

During the interim Sim was afraid he would not be able to hear anything further for the drumming of the blood in his ears.

Then a woman's voice screamed, "Mr. Petway! Husband!" It was Irene's. It held the overtones of a swift and blinding joy. Two figures on the stoop melted into one. Sim stood peering into the gloom, his mouth open and dry. He could hear the woman sobbing and the man's voice trembling. "And for God's sake, Irene, no more jealousy . . . you running off . . . it . . . it's hell." The two vanished from the stoop. The door closed.

Sim stood shivering and staring up melancholy Guadelupe Prospect until Peter touched his arm.

"It's getting toward morning, Shorty—we'd better sneak home and slip in before anybody gits awake."

Sim turned and fell in with his friend's step. After a block or two, he moistened his lips and was able to speak.

"Lengthy," he said, "I've got a book at home, and it says, Lengthy, i-it says, if you l-l-love a woman like you ort, Lengthy, y-you'll be gug-glad to give her up, if sh-sh-she'll be huh-happier that way——"

ON THE race-track, as elsewhere, Love performs its miracles, one of which is the theme of Gerald Beaumont's story, "Lil' Ol' Red Stockings," in EVERYBODY'S for February. Lady Courageous, a dainty thoroughbred mare, is the favorite charge of Sandy McKee, a trainer with an uncanny understanding of her whims and an abiding faith in her powers. Together they make racing history in a story that provides a vivid picture of paddock and betting-ring, stable and track—a story that is simply not to be missed if you are an admirer of horses or alive to the thrills of an exciting race.

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I'll Show You the Town

By Elmer Davis

(Concluded)

Chapter Fifteen

The Peacemaker

I AWOKE on Wednesday morning in a room that still breathed the fragrance that had been brought in from Chicago. To get up or not to get up—there didn't seem to be much to get up for. But there was; Agnes had said it would be in the morning papers. So I plucked my paper off the doorsill and climbed back into bed. It was there—something like half a column for the half-million, ending with the comment that Mrs. Clevenger was a philanthropist already well known in the Middle West, who purposed to make her home in New York hereafter, in order to be in close touch with the headquarters of various movements in which she was interested.

And in that sentence lay the sting. Agnes wouldn't miss half a million; after all, Goodhue's chief apprehension had been that she might marry Gushmore, and at least I'd prevented that. But if she were going to stay in New York, where worthy causes in need of money were fairly numerous; if she never went back home; if her interests now lay with Emerine Spivey and her group, Wyndham would never get much more out of Agnes.

If, indeed, she could dissociate Wyndham in her future thoughts from my unlucky self. Quite possibly I'd prejudiced her against the place; at any rate, I hadn't helped it. If I'd only had sense enough to let her alone, to leave her soul peacefully asleep, to guide her through the dullest sessions of the conference with conversation of even greater dullness! But I hadn't been willing to do that; I'd insisted on making her over; I'd wanted to show her the town. And she liked it so well that she was going to stay; with beauty such as she had now she was sure to marry again before long, and quite likely to marry rather well. In a way, I'd been the making of Agnes.

But she'd never give me the credit for that; she'd always remember that she'd seen me embracing Lucile when I hadn't embraced her. I would live in her memory as the black sheep of my family, a young man of low morals and incredible taste.

I ought to have managed better; I should never have tried to show her anything beyond Grant's Tomb and the Aquarium. For no matter what might be shown her, she would always see what she wanted to see. What I had shown her—the bright-light district of tradition—might be about to pass into history, cleaned up forever by the wave of reform. She knew it; she had even expressed some satisfaction over it. But it would make no difference to Agnes; New York might become as pure as Winona Lake, but wherever she went expecting to see wickedness she would always see it.

I put my troubles out of mind and began to read the paper; and presently I came upon an interview on the industrial outlook in the Middle West, as observed by Frank Pemberton of Chicago, who arrived at the Ritz last night. I was glad that I was in my own bed and that Lucile was six miles down-town; but I got up hastily and went to the telephone. She ought to know this. After a while the girl at the hotel switchboard managed to wake Mrs. Pemberton, and I heard a sleepy voice explaining that the ankle was lots better, thanks, and felt as if it could be walked on today.

"Did you know your husband is in town?" I asked.

"No! My goodness! Where is he, and when did he come?"

I told her.

"Then he'll hunt through all the hotels this morning, and by noon he'll have found me. I ought to have stayed in your apartment."

"Oh, no," I said. "Not at all. But I suppose he'll surely look for you and surely find you. What are we going to do?"

"Oh, I'm too sleepy to think just now. Can't you come down? Then we can talk it over."

I found her waiting in the dining-room, somewhat cheered by coffee and an omelet.

"We can't talk here," she began nervously. "He might walk in on us at any moment. Do you think we'd better go up to my room? And then if the phone rang we wouldn't answer it."

"There are objections to that plan," I protested. "For one thing, men aren't allowed above the lobby floor; and there are a few other objections with which I shall not burden you at this moment. Let's get out—there's a churchyard down the block, not very far."

"Ideal," she agreed. "Frank would never think of looking for me around a church."

SO SHE limped out, clinging to my arm, and we presently seated ourselves on a little bench, with moss-covered, half-forgotten gravestones buried in the grass about us. This atmosphere of death and the sarcophagus depressed me, but I couldn't ask her to walk farther.

"Now what are we going to do?" she demanded. "Is there anything he can do to me?"

"No," I said pensively, "I don't think he can do anything—to you."

"You mean— Why, Alec! What can he do to you?"

"He might—well, he might misinterpret the spirit of your visit to my apartment. But Bonner and the hall-boys will stand by us."

"And he'll know somebody must have lent me money," she added cheerfully. "Alec, he is the coldest, hardest man when he is crossed! You see, I was the only one who could ever do anything with him; without me he's probably uncontrollable. He—he might kill us."

"Let us strive to look at the silver lining," I proposed, "rather than the cloud."

"There isn't any silver lining," she wailed. "Celestine hasn't sent the check yet. Something must have happened to her."

I thought that most probably Celestine had decided to seize a heaven-sent opportunity and find her place in the sun; but I didn't want to weight down the occasion with any further discouragement.

"It's only Wednesday," I reminded her. "You left Chicago on Saturday. She probably hasn't had time to put the sale through as yet. And don't worry about money; I'll stand by you."

"You dear boy! I always knew you'd be loyal—through fire. I don't want to be a burden on you, but—you don't mind my owing you money just a little longer? You're the only man in the world from whom I could accept it, but I've always felt that you were—different, somehow, if you understand the way I feel about it."

"I UNDERSTAND you," I said. "Everybody that knows me well feels that way about it. I wish your husband knew me well. Now Wyman said you were going into business as a perfumer. Do you still——"

"I think that would be a good idea, don't you? I know such a lot about perfumes and cosmetics, and everybody says I have a remarkable taste——"

"I know that; my bedroom will be scented for a week. But it takes something more than taste to start a business. Your money, of course, if Celestine sends you a check for the jewelry. But it will take time to build up a clientele."

"I have a great many friends," said Lucile. "Most of them in Chicago, of course, but they all come to New York when they want anything really—spiff. So I think I ought to be able to build up a pretty good business. I could write scenarios, or something, to keep things going while I was getting started. What do you think? You see, I've got only you to depend on now. Some men would think I was a burden, but you're not like other men. Did Alan tell you that we had decided to part?"

"To part, or not to meet, or something like that."

"We did our best to find some other way out," she said dolefully. "But we couldn't. You see, I love Alan dearly, Alec. No other man has ever meant to me—not even you—or could ever mean to me what Alan has meant. But we couldn't have been happy together. It was a beautiful romance, a beautiful dream; but a marriage between us would not have been happy. I am convinced of that. For—I couldn't say this to anybody but you, Alec—I couldn't be sure of Alan. I could be true

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to the end—a woman's loyalty, you know, to the one big, grand, glorious emotion of her life; but Alan is different. He'd do his best, but he might change; we can't control our feelings, you know. Besides, Alan and I both live for self-expression, and our egos might have clashed. What I need to make me happy is a man who is sympathetic and dependable, and always kind."

It seemed to me that the logic of events was designating one such with alarming rapidity, so I hastened to carry the conversation back to that perfumery shop, and to run over a list of friends of Wyman's and mine who might help her get started.

"That sounds awfully encouraging," she admitted with more cheerfulness than she'd shown all morning. "Only—Alan is a darling, Alec, of course; but you and I know him well enough to know we can't count much on him. He'll do what he can; but I'll have to lean hard on you, Alec."

"That's what I seem to be for," I said with a sudden burst of sympathy. "You poor, lonesome, ill-used child, I'll stand by you to the limit. Don't worry about that."

I was in for it now; I could tell that from the way she squeezed my hand. I could only hope that the limit and the ante would be low enough for me to stay; but at any rate, I couldn't desert Lucile. Everybody else had done it; I'd have to stick.

"I might even find some capital for you," I said, as a sudden and encouraging thought struck me. "Capital that wouldn't arouse any—suspicions."

"You mean Mrs. Clevenger?"

"No, not Mrs. Clevenger. My influence with Mrs. Clevenger is not what it used to be; in fact, I may say that it has gone where the woodbine twineth. I was thinking of my cousin, Edith Torrey. Her husband is made of money. He and Edith are pretty good at holding on to it, but maybe— And perhaps Hazel Deming——"

I stopped short there. Somehow, on second thought, I didn't like to build any hopes on Hazel in this matter. Her father seemed to have been a hard-headed personage, and Lucile's shop was not likely to appeal to Jesse Deming's daughter as an investment. She was generous, of course, but I couldn't simply stick her up. She wasn't an Agnes. Besides, in a few days she would be guarded by a prospective husband, who wouldn't be likely to look with favor on distribution of the Deming fortune.

"WHO in the world is Hazel Deming?" Lucile asked. "I've heard you say a lot about her, but you never——"

She broke off suddenly, clutching my arm.

"Alec! Did you see that man—the one who just passed? The one with the panama? It looked like Frank—I couldn't be sure."

"Which way was he going?"

"That way. What is it—west?"

"Then he was going away from the hotel," I assured her.

"Then we'd better go back," and she rose with the aid of a hand on my shoulder. "I wouldn't want him to catch us here."

"We do have a gift for getting caught," I admitted, "but there are worse places than a churchyard."

"No, I want to get back while there's a good chance. If he comes to the hotel to-day, I'll say I'm sick. To-morrow, when my ankle's well enough so that I can r-run, if I have to, I might talk to him. Particularly if Celestine sends the check."

"Do you need any more money?"

"No, not a bit just now. I still have enough to pay my hotel bill, and I want to get out in a day or two. Do you know, I've had the nicest idea. I'd like to take one of those dear little studio apartments down in Greenwich Village. A girl Frank used to know has one, and she had us in for tea the last time we were here. Oh, it was a little beauty—white woodwork, and a studio light—open fireplaces, and big window-seats, and a view of the square. Only three rooms and bath, so I suppose it must be terribly cheap, and I'll have to live in a cheap place."

"THEN you won't live in Greenwich Village," I said. "A place like that would rent for something like my year's salary. We'll have to find something else——"

"Well, don't worry about me, Alec. You don't know how much better it's made me feel to talk to you. Last night I was so gloomy, when I saw that Alan and I couldn't— I cried half the night. But to-day life looks brighter. Frank never understood me; he was always so cold and harsh. And with Alan I always felt that I was stronger than he was, and that in a crisis I'd have to be brave for him and myself too. But you're different. You've given me some—some golden memories, in these last few days. And I know I can lean on you. You dear!"

She did lean on me, literally, till we'd got back to the hotel in safety, and she waved me a cheery good-by from the elevator.

"I'm going to be good and doctor the ankle. I'll leave you to look out for Frank."

"I'll look out for Frank," I promised as the car started up. And then, as I turned toward the door, there arose from an uncomfortable wooden chair in an obscure corner of the lobby the figure of a man in a brown suit and a derby hat, with a primly cropped mustache and a hard, business-like gray eye. He arose and came toward me, reaching into an inner pocket: I could see the headlines in the next edition of the evening papers: "Columbia Professor Slain in Hotel Lobby; Chicago Millionaire Vindicates Unwritten Law."

But the hand, when it reappeared, held nothing but a cigar-case; and he paused to bite the end off a panatela before he came up to me with his hand held out.

"Morning, Doctor Deupree. Don't know if you remember me? Name's Pemberton. Have a cigar?"

I had it; what's more, I managed to light it without a quaver.

"Saw you come in with my wife," he went on. "Thought you and I might sit down somewhere and talk this thing over. Suppose we go across the street and have a drink?"

We settled ourselves at a table across the street and mentioned something to the waiter; then he came to the point.

"You damn fool, why did you send her to your apartment? You oughtn't to have done that. I suppose you meant well enough, but it looked bad."

"How did you know?" I gasped.

"Oh, I knew she'd come to you whenever she left me. She's been threatening to leave me whenever she was mad for years. And whenever she got good and mad, she'd tell me how much happier she'd have been if she'd married you. So when I saw she was getting more and more obstreperous I looked you up and found out what had become of you, and as soon as she left home I called up a detective agency and had her followed."

"Then you——"

"I was worried," he admitted, "when I first got to town and they gave me an outline of what had happened. But they'd pumped your hall-boys and telephone girl, so they'd found out it wasn't as bad as it looked. And I went up this morning and had a talk with this fellow Bonner. He's a friend of yours all right; he lied from here to kingdom come. But patchin' his story together with what I knew already I could see that nothing had—happened. I didn't think anything had, anyway. She's a fool, but she's not that kind of a fool; and I'd had the detectives find out something about you, and they told me you were nothing to be scared of."

It was a Gaylord who began to flare up at this, but a Deupree who decided to sit still and wait watchfully. I wasn't too proud to fight, but I saw no reason for picking a quarrel over a point of honor when Pemberton was so plainly pacific.

"I suppose she was broke," he went on. "But you could have lent her enough money to go to a hotel, instead of——"

"I did lend her money," I explained, "but not till the next day. It was Sunday and I was broke."

"Hmph!" He pulled out a roll of bills. "How much did you lend her?"

"I'm afraid I can't go into details in a personal matter of that sort," I said stiffly. "Whatever I lent her is between Lucile and myself."

"I don't propose to have my wife borrow money from anybody but me," he growled. "I don't care how much you lend her, but I'll have to lend it to you first. It's all got to come from me."

"I WON'T," I said. "Your wife has left you for reasons which may be good or bad, but reasons of her own at any rate. She doesn't want to have anything to do with you. As long as she doesn't, I'll do what I can to help her; and you can sue me and be damned."

We glowered at each other for a moment like a couple of roosters; then he put his money back in his pocket.

"Oh, all right," he grumbled. "But what are we going to do now?"

"Have another drink," I suggested.

"Well, I don't care if I do. But what I meant was, what does she think she's going to do now?"

"You'll have to get any details that you may want from her," I warned him. "But I suppose I can tell you that she means to go into business."

"Who is the goat? She hasn't got any money."

"She may—" I stopped, but he understood.

"You mean her jewels? Oh, Celestine knows which side her bread is buttered on. She came to me with the bag right off."

"She has friends who will back her," I asserted boldly. "Women."

"Back her in what?"

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We presently seated ourselves on a little bench, with moss-covered, half-forgotten gravestones buried in the grass about us.

"I believe she intends to sell perfumes and cosmetics."

"Hmph! Well, she might be able to sell 'em; she's bought enough. Look here, Deupree, there's no use of our beatin' around the bush. I take it you want to do whatever is best for her, don't you? I do. Now let's get together. Oh, I know the stuff she's handed you. Wants to realize her individuality; to live her own life. Says I don't understand her.

"Why, if I didn't understand her and myself from A to Z we couldn't have lived together six months. I've always understood her; that's why she's sore. Now I want to see her contented. If she thinks it'll make her any happier to run a perfumery shop in New York instead of running my house in Chicago, I'm willing to let her try it, but I'll pay the freight. I can afford it and you can't."

"I'm afraid you don't understand her," I objected. "What she wants is to do things for herself——"

"Now look here," said Pemberton confidentially. "If you'd lived with her for seven years you'd know just how much Lucile can do for herself. It's not an awful lot. She's no genius. You say I don't understand her. Why, I know that girl's—soul, I suppose she calls it—inside out and backward. Excuse me if I seem crude, but I understood her well enough to get her away from you once, and by God, if I have to, I'll do it again. You read Browning to her, and wrote her letters—oh, yes, she used to read them to me—about the great things you two were going to do, hand in hand, in the way of reforming the world. And while you were pulling that stuff I was cuddling her up and telling her she was the best-looking girl in the Middle West. You notice which one of us she married.

"SHE started this talk about running off and leaving me on our honeymoon, but it was six years before she went. Nobody else could have held her that long. And after she's had her fling she'll come right back home, and like it. I know her. She's always had some tame poet, or painter, or author around the house to pat her hand and tell her what an inspiration she was, and what a damn shame it was that this rough guy from the Board of Trade didn't break a blood-vessel and leave her free. I let 'em talk. It made her think she was a regular goddess, and it didn't do any harm. For I know that girl; her feet get cold, cold as ice, when it comes to a showdown. There was never any danger she'd make a fool of herself, that way. So I let 'em live. The last one nicked me for ten thousand, but it was worth it to see the way he could make her purr.

"Now you may think—and I suppose you do—that she'll start in this business and get rich, and leave me flat forever. Don't you believe it. You never had to pay her bills. I don't care how big a trade she got, she'd never make money. It isn't in her. And as long's somebody has got to put up a wad for her to spend, I'll do it myself. I'm used to it. She's finally made good on her talk, and she's got to have her fling before she comes back. I don't care what she does so long as she doesn't hook up with some rat-eyed pussycat of a so-called man and start out as a dance team. That I won't stand for. But if anything else will amuse her, I'll put up the money till she gets tired of her playthings and toddles back home. She's a damn little fool, but I like her."

"At any rate," I advised, "let her alone for a day or two. She's a little bit afraid of you now, and she's hurt her ankle——"

"Yes, the detectives told me about that. How is it?"

"Oh, it's much better; you've seen that she could walk, with help. But it's affected her nerves a little."

"Yes, I suppose it would. All right; I'll hold off till to-morrow, anyway. And if you see her again to-day, I wish you'd tell her to rub it with Olivinda Ointment. Best thing I know for a sprain."

"Then you won't do anything——"

"I won't try to see her till to-morrow. But I wish you'd tell her I want to talk to her then. I won't bite her; all I want is to get things straightened out. And for the Lord's sake don't lend her any more money. This is my party. And from what I've heard, I don't think you've got much more sense than she has."

Chapter Sixteen

An Eventful Holiday

THE man was crude, but he inspired confidence. After all, he knew Lucile better than I, and his diagnosis might be right.

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But I couldn't accept it offhand. Lucile had deliberately run away from him, so it was evident that she wouldn't want to put herself under obligation to him. Everybody else had failed her; it was up to a Deupree to keep his word, and it was the business of a Gaylord to aid a defenseless lady who was counting on him. So I contented myself with telephoning that I had talked to her husband, that he wasn't in a murderous mood, and that he wanted to see her tomorrow.

"He's going to tell me to come back to Chicago," she predicted. "I'll never do that."

"I don't think you'll find him unreasonable," I said. "And I believe he's quite willing to let you stay in New York. But do as you please; I'll stick by you, whatever you decide to do."

Though by this time I had pretty completely lost confidence in myself. I was certainly a failure as a friend to woman; I hadn't started my book; if I had to look after Lucile I might never have time to start it, if indeed I didn't have to go to work as a window washer or something, to make money enough to support her. For the moment I had seen enough of the wife of Frank Pemberton, and I was done forever with the widow of Zaccheus Clevenger; there seemed to be nothing left to do but to get a little harmless amusement by taking Kenneth France's fiancée to tea. That would be refreshing, and I needed refreshment.

But the voice of the dragon Sarah—a very hoarse voice—told me that Miss Deming wasn't at home.

"Where is she?" I inquired. "And—I hope you're not ill, Mrs. Whitlow."

"Who is this? Oh, I know you. Well, young man, it ain't any of your business whether I'm ill or not. I can take care of myself. And never you mind where she is. Do you think I want you to get another chance to lay in wait for that there innocent child—"

There was more of it, but I hung up the receiver. That trip up the river had evidently done for me. I wouldn't see Hazel again unless she ran away from Sarah; and she wouldn't have time to do that.

I stood on the curb of the Avenue and wondered what to do next. About the best thing, I thought, would be to go down to the Aquarium and jump in; I would at least be in the company of my own kind. And just as I got this far a car rolled up and stopped in front of me—a monstrous Sagamore touring car, dark gray of hue, long and solid and full-chested, with its lines running in long sweeps like the sides of a pirate galley. And Hazel sat at the wheel, in a white linen suit and the whipcord tam—

"THIS *is* luck," she said cheerily. "What are you doing?"

"Waiting for you," I told her. "I've just been telephoning to Sarah."

"Did she tell you I'd got the car?"

"Sarah was too hoarse to tell me anything, except that it was none of my business where you were, and that she didn't think much of me anyway, and that she hoped I'd choke."

"Yes, she's got a frightful sore throat. The doctor told her she mustn't dare to leave her room. Isn't it lucky? Well! Get in."

I seated myself beside her, though there was room for a whole convention in the tonneau; and with a suddenly silenced moan the big car rolled forward with the slow majesty of unmeasured power.

"Where are we going?" I inquired.

"Well, as long as Sarah is sick, I thought we might as well improve each shining hour. What do you say we go down to Long Beach and go swimming, and dance a little afterward."

"Nothing better," I agreed. "I suppose we can rent suits at the beach—you wouldn't want to go up after yours and disturb Sarah."

"OH, I have mine with me," Hazel explained. "I thought maybe I'd go somewhere and swim, even before I met you." And she held out a silver mesh bag—bulging, to be sure, but still hardly big enough to hold much of a bathing suit. "My Annette," she explained. "I wore it all the time, in California. You surely don't mean—"

I nodded.

"If you wore that anywhere around New York," I told her sorrowfully, "you'd go to jail. This is a moral town."

"Well, I never! I suppose I'll have to stop at a store and buy something, then."

And she did buy something, which she displayed to me as we drove away eastward, toward the bridge. It would get by, I thought, though there weren't any stockings—

Hazel shook her head when I mentioned this.

"I never knew how wicked I was till I came to New York," she sighed. "To the pure all things are pure. Well, I can't wear these, that's sure. If we go to jail we go to jail."

"Their cops are sometimes generous," I told her. "If you hurry down into the surf they'll look the other way. And I hope this is one of their generous days; I don't feel like going to jail to-day. I need a rest."

"Am I a rest for you?" Hazel inquired blandly.

"You are that," I told her, "and about sixteen other things— Only, to-day my nerves are bad. So please don't try to kill any road hogs, or walk in on many jewel robberies. I don't feel up to a career of crime just now."

"You won't find me looking for trouble," she assured me. "Things happen to me; I don't happen to things."

However, we had a peaceful trip down to Long Beach—peaceful, and silent, and restful. It was rather late when we got into the water; too late for more than a few scattered bathers to be left in the surf, but too early for dinner; so we sprinted across the sand and into the ocean under a curtain fire of stares from the strollers and rolling-chair paraders on the boardwalk. Even this reformed bathing suit was of a somewhat Californian scarcity. But there were no policemen at hand, and in a moment we felt the swirl of cool water about knees and ankles, the salty torrent of a breaker over our heads.

"I love it!" she cried. We plunged through another breaker, and another, and then we were out beyond the surf, swimming through a long, deep swell. The blue-green water was warm enough, and the fierceness of the day's heat was abating. Above us the sky was silver-gray; to the westward the ocean faded into a golden haze, a puff of breeze from the land brought the tinkle of an orchestra playing in one of the restaurants along the boardwalk. Hazel turned over on her side and waved a challenging hand.

"Now I'll race you!"

And away she went, sliding through the water like a torpedo. On the sprints she had me bested, as I had to admit after we had tried three or four; but when she had provoked me by remarks, about overstudy and short wind into challenging her to a race to a red buoy, faintly visible far out in the haze, I found that on longer distances I could draw away from her. It was farther away than I thought, and I had time to wait a good two minutes, resting myself with an arm on the iron sphere, before she came up.

"You *are* a good swimmer," she admitted panting; and with a leisurely swing of her arm she scooped up a handful of salt water and shot it into my face. Then she turned over and floated.

"You'd better rest on the buoy," I advised. "That was a pretty long pull." She demurred, then assented; but her first careless success in seating herself cross-legged on the unsteady ball made her overconfident, and when a long swell struck her a moment later she was capsized with a scream of laughter. Then she clambered back more carefully, and draped herself over the curving surface—anchored by her toes somewhere below, chin resting on crossed wrists, staring down at me as I floated with my hands resting lightly on the buoy.

We were so far out that the row of hotels and restaurants along the boardwalk looked like a child's village of cardboard—almost invisible save when now and then we rose on a swell. Farther out we could see a sail or two, and from somewhere in the luminous west, toward Rockaway came the sputter of a motorboat. I spread out lazily in the warm water, and laughed.

"What's the matter?"

"A MOMENT ago," I said, "I should have told you that this was the first interval of real happiness I've had to-day. It has just occurred to me that it's the first interval of real happiness I've had in several years. I've left all my troubles ashore; and I'm out here with nobody but you and the sea and the sky. And I like it. I don't want to go back."

Her green eyes brooded as they looked down on me—there was no laughter in them just now. They were nice eyes when they laughed, nice eyes when they were sober. But they were still mystifying, and impersonal, and reserved, for all their frank friendliness. I couldn't quite understand them. I wished I could see them, some time, when they held a trace of feeling; it was the one thing that I had missed. She was amazingly restful, amazingly companionable; but the man who could find in those eyes a flicker of tenderness would have found something that was worth a long search, and longer waiting.

And Kenneth France had probably found it.

"What's happened to you?" she asked suddenly; I suppose that last uncomfortable thought had made itself apparent. Well, a number of things had happened to me, particularly since I came out in the water; some of them were still happening to me, and seemed likely to continue to

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happen to me for a long time to come. But there was no point in telling Hazel about that.

"Oh, the usual misfortunes," I said listlessly. "Whatever I have tried to do has fallen down, and generally it has fallen on me."

"Tell me your troubles."

I told her my troubles. I started with the most recent—Agnes and Lucile, and Lucile's husband; and she was such a good listener that I presently found myself going into the painful history of the Deuprees and the Gaylords, and the unhappy individual in whom their blood was blended. I suppose I must have sounded bitter; I felt bitter. But she was nice about it; she didn't laugh.

"SO THERE you are," I finished sadly. "Whenever I try to push Fate away from the switchboard and work the plugs myself I always make the wrong connection, or blow out a fuse. When I try to be—to be sentimental, I lose my nerve. When I try to stand by a girl in trouble I get her and myself in more trouble. And when her husband comes along he takes one look into my doglike, faithful countenance, and decides she must have been safe under my care. Can you beat it?"

"I wouldn't worry about her husband not taking you seriously," said Hazel. "If he had, you might be in the morgue by this time. You will be anyway, if you stay out here in the water much longer. I can beat you in."

And she slid off the buoy and shot away toward the shore. She had a good ten yards' start, but I caught up with her and passed her, and was standing on the beach with the wash playing about my toes when she splashed up out of the surf, laughing and panting and shivering. Beyond the boardwalk strings of colored lights were aglow, and violins cried from the cafés. Hazel ran up to me and linked her bare arm in mine.

"Brrrh? Cold! Alec Deupree, if you get dressed before I do you'll have to hurry. I want a cocktail and a beefsteak—a big, thick, juicy steak, with mushrooms piled all over it."

We got the cocktail and the steak and the mushrooms, but somehow the dinner didn't go smoothly. I had talked so much on the buoy that I thought it was time for me to relapse into silence; perhaps I had talked too much. And my silence, I suppose, was more somber and depressing than I realized. Hazel was silent, too, stirred not at all by the sparkle of the music or the warming influence of that amazing steak; and I thought I knew what was in her mind.

"When is the boat due?" I asked presently.

"Monday. Why?"

"Then there isn't much time left for me to show you the town. Next week you'll be in more competent hands."

"We haven't seen much, have we? Roadhouses, and a hole in the street."

I realized that as an entertainer I had not been wholly successful; and I became continuously more unsuccessful as the dinner progressed toward the demi-tasse. And afterward Hazel positively refused to dance.

"We'd better go back to town," she said drearily. "Sarah has probably called out the Fire Department and put an ad in the lost-and-found column."

We drove back in a dismal silence that lasted till we reached the garage, and the big Sagamore was put to bed. Then, as we walked out in the street and I turned toward the Plaza, she looked at her wrist watch and smiled.

"Half past ten; that isn't late, is it? Alec, I've been acting like a pig. Let's take a walk. Show me some of the places you told me about that night up the river, will you?"

"How about the lower East Side?" I proposed. "It ought to be at its best to-night; it's so hot nobody will want to stay indoors."

"That sounds thrilling," she agreed. "And I want some excitement to-night. I want to see the Bowery."

"The Bowery is dead," I told her. "Dead and buried. It's as respectable as any other business street. And you won't find many thrills anywhere in the East Side, unless you bring your own. But there ought to be a good deal of noise and movement and color——"

"All right," she assented. "Only I'm spoiling for trouble to-night. I'd like to see a shooting. Wouldn't you?"

Inasmuch as I had spent part of the morning in expectation of being shot, I felt no blood lust. But I said nothing.

We took the elevated to Fourteenth Street, walked over to Second Avenue and strolled slowly down the bright-lit swarming boulevard. The heat that had banked up in the pavements during the day was still rolling back in waves that struck us in the face as we wandered down the avenue through the buzzing crowds, past the brilliantly lighted theatre fronts at the lower end, and off down a narrow street to the left, into the East Side that she'd heard about.

A JUMBLE of swarming tenements, cut up by narrow streets littered with waste paper and decaying fruits—ill-smelling, noisy, steaming streets; fire-escapes hung with clothes and bedding till there seemed to be a long, ragged curtain along the walls on either side of us; windows jammed with half dressed men and women talking to neighbors next door or across the way. Whole families, from grandparents down, clustering about the entrance of a tenement, laughing, chattering; old women guarding baby carriages at the curb, gossiping while they kept an eye on the little children tumbling about beneath the feet of passers-by; little girls skipping the rope in a circle somehow kept clear in the midst of the crowds; boys playing leapfrog in the streets; squalid, good-humored old people; flashily dressed, not overly clean young people; stifling heat, clattering voices, clamorous stenches, and a compelling, joyous neighborliness. Lines of pushcarts in the gutters, lit by lurid gasoline flares; groups of dapper, alert young men, parties of amazingly pretty girls, family groups, old people, slowly moving through the swarming streets, with the children always under foot; an occasional automobile pushing its honking way through the crowds; the tinkle of a bell opening a pathway for the donkey wagon full of dirty children, riding around the block for a cent; the dark blue of a policeman, gossiping with a knot of men in front of a restaurant, passing slowly down the street with a party of boys at his heels. The yellow flaring entrances of movie theatres, alive with people pushing in and out, or stopping to stare at the lithographs on which familiar faces appeared above legends in a strange alphabet; groups of girls surveying enviously the panel of photographs of movie stars. A continuous babel of chatter and laughter and hucksters' calls, the clack of Yiddish and English and Roumanian and Hungarian and Italian; the blare of motor horns, the tinkle of pushcart bells, the distant rumble of the elevated; and the shrill cries of the children as a continuous obbligato over the ceaseless murmur of the East Side.

It was all new to Hazel, and she looked, listened and sniffed with huge appreciation.

"It's so—alive," she tried to explain. "And I love the way they let the children run the whole place, don't you?"

She didn't have the children's knack of wriggling out of the way of danger; after I'd lifted her out of the path of two or three pushcarts and a motor truck she tucked her hand in my arm and pressed close to me as we pushed slowly on, to come to a standstill at last in the tight-jammed mob in front of a doorway flanked by two great yellow lights. Above the door a banner proclaimed in three colors and four languages that this was the night of the grand ball of the Mohilevsky Young Men's Social Club, tickets for lady and gent, fifty cents, including hat-check. Between the lights the stairs mounted under a trelliswork hung with paper foliage through which red and blue electric lamps glimmered; and in the assembly-room, above, its windows crowded with young people, a melody from a Broadway musical comedy was being afflicted with queer Oriental modulations.

"Let's dance," Hazel suggested.

"Better not," I advised. "We probably couldn't get in. We don't belong here, you see, and they're rather sensitive about intruders. We can find a café somewhere out of this district and dance there."

"I want to dance here," she insisted rebelliously. "We might at least try to get in."

I didn't like it, but she wanted to dance. So I shoved a way through the crowd with Hazel clinging to my elbow, and found that there seemed to be no obstacle; my fifty cents was as welcome as anybody's.

And the dance was all new to Hazel, too; she lost step half a dozen times in our first waltz, staring at the bare walls, the red-painted ceiling, the curtained stage at one end of the room, the long bar across one side with a row of iron tables in front of it. The hall was outrageously hot and close, heavy with cheap perfume; but the only complaint she had to make was that the people looked just like anybody else.

WE WERE at one of the iron tables a little later, sucking sarsaparilla through straws, when a thin little fellow with bright eyes came up to us and held out a gleeful hand.

"Why, hello, Doctor Deupree! Come down to look over the East Side?"

For a moment I couldn't place him; then I recognized Leon Krimsky, who had been the star of my class in Cicero's essays three or four years ago.

"I'd take the lady away from here if I was you," he whispered. "Looks as if there might be some trouble."

"What kind of trouble?" Hazel asked hopefully.

"Well," Leon apologized, "there's a

(continued on page 94)

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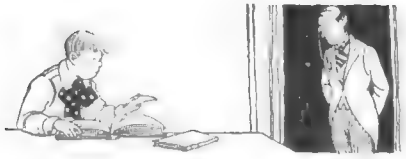
UNDER THE SPREADING CHESTNUT TREE



EDITOR'S NOTE—Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for usable ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped, addressed envelope.

THE professor's young son had reached the collecting age. He took a fancy to moths and soon had a drawer full. His father, seizing upon the psychological moment when the will to learn had been aroused, suggested that he go down to the public library and get some books on the subject. The boy came back with a couple of volumes, which he set about reading with great eagerness.

But they failed to interest him, and after turning over the leaves with increasing dissatisfaction, he threw them aside. His watchful parent then approached:

"Didn't you find what you wanted?"

"Nope."

"Why not?"

"Don't seem to be anything about moths in 'em."

"Did you pick out the right books?" asked the professor.

"Sure I did," replied the son. "I looked up the names in the card catalog. One of them is 'Moths,' by Ouida, and the other is 'Advice to Young Mothers,' by some doctor."

"YES," said the woman with the thin lips, "I might manage to give you a bite to eat if you'll saw and chop a good pile of fire-wood and bring in a few buckets of water and clean the weeds out of the garden and mend the fence."

"Lady," replied Weary Willie, "I'm only a hungry wayfarer; I ain't yer husband."

A FREIGHTER, unloading at a certain Pacific port, was short-handed and the captain, calling to a loiterer on the dock, asked him if he wanted to work.

"Not for *you*, you d—n blank, blankety blank scoundrel!" answered the man.

"Who is that fellow?" asked someone standing near.

"I don't know," said the captain in a puzzled tone, "but he seems to know me."

TWO gentlemen riding on a train were both very much intoxicated.

First Gent: "What time is it?"

Second Gent: (after extracting a matchbox from his pocket with much exertion and gazing at it intently) "Thursday."

First Gent: "My God! I've got to get off here."

A LITTLE girl who had been out walking with her aunt heard the latter complaining that her feet were tired. "My feet get tired too, when I go out walking," said the small maiden, "but I always think what a nice ride my stomach has been having."

DANNY was looking at the picture of Elijah ascending to Heaven in a chariot of fire. Seeing the halo about Elijah's head, he cried: "O look, mamma, he's carrying an extra tire!"

TWO men, once great friends, had lost sight of each other for years. One night William, who had come down in the world, entered a small and very cheap restaurant. As he took up the menu a waiter came toward him and, looking up, William recognized his old friend James.

"James!" he cried. "You a waiter! And in a dump like this!"

"Yes," said James caustically, "but, thank God, I don't eat here!"

AT THE morning service last week, ten-year-old Roger was seated beside a very fashionably attired woman.

As the bearer of the contribution-box came slowly down the aisle, the lady began to search wildly but ineffectually for the money she thought she had brought along.

Roger watched her anxiously, and when the man was but three pews away, said in a low voice:

"Here, take *my* dime and I'll hide under the seat."

"SPEAKING of percentages," said the old-time politician, "reminds me of Tom Bledsoe, who had the butcher shop in our town. He used to buy rabbits from the boys. One day he hung up a sign announcing rabbit sausage for sale. People wondered what it was, took a hack at it, and liked it. Pretty soon he was selling rabbit sausage by the wagon-load.

"But the pure-food inspectors came prying around, and asked Tom how he could make so much sausage when he got only a few dozen rabbits a day. Finally he admitted that there was some horse-meat in the sausage. Then they wanted to know how much horse-meat. After a long grilling he said it was fifty per cent. When pressed further by his questioners, he explained that fifty per cent. meant one rabbit to one horse."

SMITH was having lunch with a friend who regaled him with accounts of the sayings and doings of his four-year-old boy, a child of admittedly astounding precociousness. Smith laughed generously at the first three or four yarns, fidgeted a bit at the next few, yawned slightly and politely as the recital stretched on, and finally settled himself with an air of resignation to listen indefinitely.

When at the last there came a lull in the flow of his friend's stories about the marvelous child, Smith leaned across the table and in a most earnest and interested manner asked:

"Bill, what does your youngster think of the League of Nations?"

MOSE Johnson was under sentence of death in a Kentucky jail, and as the fateful day drew near he grew very nervous about it. His keeper, a sympathetic man, suggested that Mose's only hope lay in an appeal to the governor. As Mose could not write the keeper offered to write a letter from dictation.

Mose, after collecting his thoughts very earnestly for a full five minutes, dictated the following:

"Dear Marse Guv'nah: They's fixin' to hang me come this Friday, and here it am [illegible] Mose Johnson."

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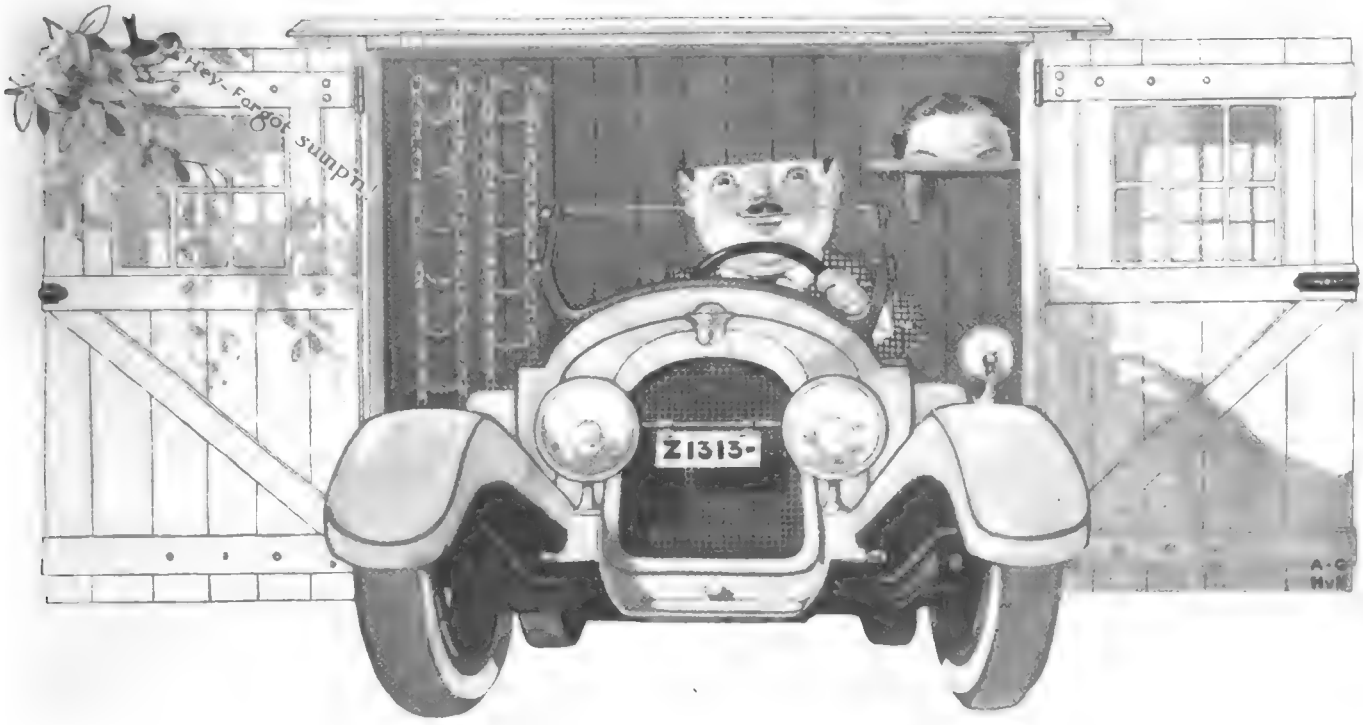

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IF WINTER COMES

(*Continued from page 37*)

Dear Marko—We're back. We've been from China to Peru—almost. Come up one day and be bored about it. How are you? NONA.

He thought: "Funny she didn't mention she'd written just now. Perhaps she thought it was funny I didn't say I'd had it. I must tell her."

He returned her letter to its envelope and put the envelope in his pocket. Then wheeled on his bicycle into his gate. He smiled. "Mabel will be surprised at me back like this."

Mabel was descending the stairs as he entered the hall.

"Hullo?" she greeted him. "Have you forgotten something?"

He smiled invitingly. "No, I've just come back. I suddenly thought we'd have a holiday."

She showed puzzlement. "A holiday? What, the office? All of you?"

She had paused three steps from the foot of the stairs, her right hand on the banisters.

His wife . . .

He slid his hand up the rail and rested it on hers. "Good lord, no. Not the office. No, I suddenly thought we'd have a holiday. You and I."

He half hoped she would respond to the touch of his hand by turning the palm of her own to it. But he thought, "Why should she?" and she did not. She said, "But how extraordinary! Whatever for?"

"Well, why not?"

"But what did you say at the office? What reason did you give?"

"Didn't give any. I just said I thought I wouldn't be back."

"But whatever will Mr. Fortune think?"

"Oh, what does it matter what he thinks? He won't think anything about it."

"But he'll think it's funny."

HE THOUGHT, "Dash these buts!" This was what he called "niggling." It was on the tip of his tongue to say "Why niggle about the thing?" but he recollected his purpose; that was him all over and that was just it! He said brightly: "Let him. Do him good. The idea suddenly came to me as a bit of a lark to have an unexpected holiday with you, and I just cleared off and came!"

She had descended and he moved along the hall with her toward the morning-room.

"It's rather extraordinary," she said.

She certainly was not enthusiastic over it. She asked, "Well, what are you going to do?"

He wished he had thought of some plan as he came along. "What time's lunch? Half-past one? What about getting your bike and going for a bit of a run first?"

She was at a drawer of her table where she kept, with beautiful neatness, implements for various household duties. A pair of long scissors came out. "I can't possibly. I've things to do. Besides, some one's coming to lunch."

He began to feel he had been a fool. The feeling nettled him and he thought "Why 'some one'? Dash it, I might be a stranger in the house. Why doesn't she say whom?" And then he thought, "Why

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should she? This is just *it*. I'd have heard all about it at breakfast if I'd been decently communicative."

He said "Good. Who?"

She took a shallow basket from the shelf. He knew this and the long scissors for her flower-cutting implements. "Mr. Bagshaw."

And before he could stop himself he had groaned, "Oh, lord!"

She "flew up" and he rushed in tumultuously to make amends for his blunder and prevent her flying up.

"I really can not see why you should object to Mr. Boom Bagshaw."

"I don't. I don't in the least."

"I've heard you say—often—that he's far and away the best preacher you've ever heard."

"He is. Absolutely."

"Well, then?"

"It's just his coming to lunch. He's such a terrific talker, and you know I can't stick talkers."

"Yes, that's just why I invite them when you're not here."

He laughed and came across the room toward her impulsively. He was going to carry this through. "You've got me there. Properly." He took the basket from her hand. "Come on, we'll cut the flowers. I'll be absolutely chatty with old Bagshaw."

She smiled and her smile encouraged him tremendously. This was the way to do it! They went through the glass doors into the garden and he continued: "Really chatty. I'm going to turn over a new leaf. As a matter of fact, that's why I came back. I got out of bed the wrong side this morning, didn't I?"

He felt as he always remembered once feeling as a boy when, after going to bed, he had come down-stairs in his nightshirt and said to his father, "I say, father, I didn't tell the truth this morning. I had been smoking." He had never forgotten the enormous relief of that confession, nor the bliss of his father's "That's all right, old man. That's fine. Don't cry, old chap." And he felt precisely that same enormous relief now.

She said: "Was that the reason? How awfully funny of you!" and she gave one of her sudden bursts of laughter.

He had a swift feeling that this was not quite the same as the reception of his confession by his father in that long-ago; but he thought immediately "The thing's quite different." Anyway he had confessed. She knew why he had come back so suddenly. He felt immensely happy. And when she said, "I think we'll have some of the roses," he gaily replied, "Yes, rather. These roses!"

Fine! How easy to be on jolly terms!

And immediately, it proved not so easy.

II

SHE cut the first rose and held it to her lips, smelling it. "Lovely. Who was your letter from, Mark?"

He thought: "How on earth did she know?" He had forgotten it himself. "However did you know? From Lady Tybar. They're back."

"I saw you from the window with the postman. Lady Tybar! Whatever was she writing to you about?"

He somehow did not like this. Why "*whatever*"? And being watched was

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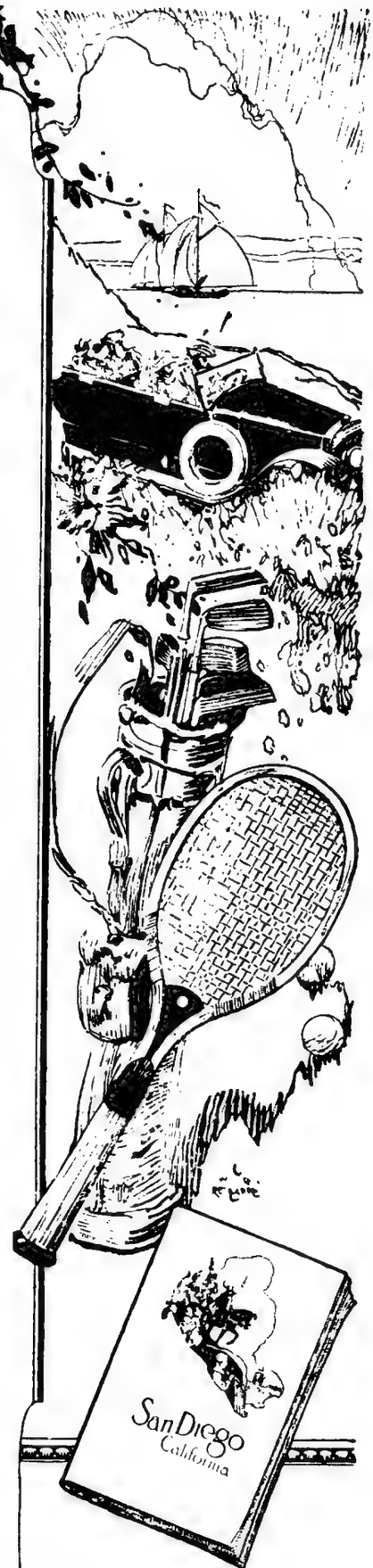

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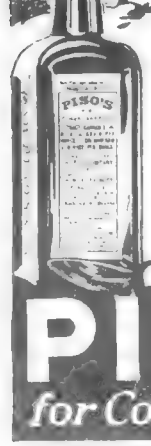

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rather beastly; he remembered he had fiddled about with the letter—half put it in his pocket and then taken it out again. And why not? What did it matter? But he had a prevision that it was going to matter. Mabel did not particularly like Nona. He said: "Just to say they're back. She wants us to go up there."

"An invitation? Whyever didn't she write to me?"—"Whyever" again!—"May I see it?"

He took the letter from his pocket and handed it to her. "It's not exactly an invitation—not formal."

She did what he called "flicked" the letter out of its envelope. He watched her reading it and in his mind he could see it as perfectly as she with her eyes, the odd, neat script; in his mind he read it with her, word by word.

DEAR MARKO: We're back. We've been from China to Peru—almost. Come up one day and be bored about it. How are you?

NONA.

His thought was "Damn the letter!"

Mabel handed it back, without returning it to its envelope. She said "No, it's not—formal."

She snipped three roses with astonishing swiftness—*snip, snip, snip!*

Sabre sought about in his mind for something to say.

At the end of an enormous cavity of time he found some slight remark about blight on the rose-trees—the absence of it this year—and ventured it. "No blight this year, eh?"

"No; is there?" agreed Mabel—*snip!*

Nevertheless conversation arose from this venture and was maintained. They moved about the garden from flower-bed to flower-bed. In half an hour the shallow basket was beautified with fragrant blooms and Mabel thought she had enough.

"Well, that's that," said Sabre as they reentered the morning-room.

III

LOW JINKS, her matchless training at the level of mysteriously performing duties pat to the moment and without command, appeared with a tray of vases. Each vase was filled to precisely half its capacity with water. There were also a folded newspaper, a pair of small gilt scissors and a saucer. Low Jinks spread the newspaper at one end of the table, arranged the vases in a semi-circle upon it, and placed the gilt scissors precisely in alinement with the right-hand vase of the semi-circle, and the saucer (for the stalk ends) precisely in alinement with the left-hand vase. She then withdrew, closing the door with exquisite softness. Sabre had never seen this rite before. The perfection of its performance was impressive. He thought: "Mabel is marvelous." He said: "Shall I take them out of the basket?"

"No, leave them. I take them up just as I want them."

She took up a creamy rose and snipped off a fragment of stalk over the saucer: "Why does she call you 'Marko'?"

He was utterly taken back. If the question had come from any one but Mabel, he would have quite failed to connect it with the letter. But there had distinctly been an "incident" over the letter; though so far closed, as he had imagined, that he was completely surprised.

He said "Who? Nona?"

"Yes, Nona, if you like. Lady Tybar."

"Why, she always has. You know that."

Mabel put the rose into a specimen vase with immense care and touched a speck off its petals with her fingers. "I really didn't."

"Mabel, you know you do. You must have heard her."

"Well, I may have. But long ago. I certainly didn't know she used it in letters."

He felt he was growing angry. "What on earth's the difference?"

"It seems to me there's a great deal of difference. I didn't know she wrote you letters."

He *was* angry. "Damn it, she doesn't write me letters."

She shrugged her shoulders: "You seem to get them, anyway."

Maddening!

And then he thought: "I'm not going to let it be maddening. This is just what happens." He said: "Well, this is silly. I've known her—we've known one another for years, since we were children, pretty well. She's called me by my Christian name since I can remember. You must have heard her. We don't see much of her—perhaps you haven't. I thought you had. Any way, dash the thing. What does it matter?"

"It doesn't *matter*"—she launched a flower into a vase—"a bit. I only think it's funny, that's all."

"Well, it's just her way."

Mabel gave a little sniff. He thought it was over. But it wasn't over. "If you ask me, I call it a funny letter. You say your Christian name, but it isn't your Christian name—*Marko!* And then saying 'How are you?' like that——"

"Like what? She just said it, didn't she?"

"Yes, I know. And then 'Nona.' Don't you call that funny?"

"Well, I always used to call her 'Nona.' She'd have thought it funny, as you call it, to put anything else. I tell you it's just her way."

"Well, I think it's a very funny way and I think anybody else would think so. I don't like her. I never did like her."

There seemed no more to say.

IV

HE WALKED up to his room.

He closed the door behind him and sat on a straight-backed chair, his legs outthrust.

Why had he returned? He "worked back" through the morning on the Fargus principle. Not because of his thoughts after the Twyning business; not because of the disturbance of the Twyning business. No. He had returned because he had seen Nona. Thoughts — feelings — had been stirred within him by meeting her. And it had suddenly been rather hateful to have those thoughts and to feel that—that Mabel had no place in them.

Well, why had he come up here? What was he doing up here? Well, it hadn't been altogether successful. Mabel hadn't been particularly excited to see him. No, but that didn't count. Why should she be? He had gone off after breakfast glum

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as a bear. Well, then there was that niggling business over why he had returned. Always like that. Never plump out over a thing he put up. Niggling. And then this infernal business about the letter. That word "funny." She must have used it a hundred times. Still— The niggling had been carried off, they had gone into the garden together; and this infernal letter business—at least he had come away without boiling over about it. Much better to have come away as he did. Still——

V

A GONG boomed enormously through the house.

Sabre washed his hands and went down. Mabel was in the morning-room, seated at the center-table, where the flowers had been and where now was her embroidery-basket. She was embroidering, an art which, in common with all the domestic arts, she performed to perfection.

"Bagshaw's late?" said Sabre.

Mabel glanced at the clock. Her gesture above her busy needle was pretty.

"Well, he wasn't absolutely sure about coming. I thought we wouldn't wait. Ah, there he is."

Sabre thought: "Good. That business is over. Nothing in it. Only Mabel's way."

Sounds in the hall. "In the morning-room," came Low Jinks's voice. "Lunch—wash your hands, sir?"

There was only one person in all England who, arriving at Crawshaws, would not have been gently but firmly enfolded by the machine-like order of its perfect administration and been led in and introduced with rites proper to the occasion. But that one person was the Rev. Cyril Boom Bagshaw, and he now strolled across the threshold and into the room.

VI

HE STROLLED in. He wore a well-made suit of dark-gray flannel, brown brogue shoes and a soft collar with a black tie tied in a sailor's-knot. He disliked clerical dress and he rarely wore it. He was dark. His good-looking face bore habitually a rather sulky expression, as though he were a little bored or dissatisfied. You would never have thought, to look at him, that he was a clergyman, or as he would have said, a priest, and in not thinking that you would have paid him the compliment that pleased him most. This was not because Mr. Boom Bagshaw lacked earnestness in his calling, he was enormously in earnest, but because he disliked and despised the conventional habits and manners and appearance of the clergy and, in any case, intensely disliked being one of a class. For the same reasons he wore a monocle: not because the vision of his right eye was defective but because no clergyman wears a monocle. It is not done by the priesthood and that is why the Rev. Cyril Boom Bagshaw did it.

He strolled negligently into the morning-room, his hands in his trousers pockets, the skirt of his jacket rumpled on his wrists. He gave the impression of having been strolling about the house all day and of now strolling in here for want of a better room to stroll into. He nodded negligently to Sabre. "Hullo, Sabre." He smiled negligently at Mabel, and seated himself negligently on the edge of the table, still with his hands in his pockets. He swung one leg negligently and negligently remarked, "Good morning, Mrs. Sabre. Embroidery?"

Sabre had the immediate and convinced feeling that the negligent and reverend gentleman was not in his house but that he was permitted to be in the house of the negligent and reverend gentleman. And this was the feeling that the negligent and reverend gentlemen invariably gave to his hosts, whoever they might be, likewise to his congregations. Indeed, it was said by a profane person (who fortunately does not enter this history) that the Deity entered Mr. Boom Bagshaw's church on the same terms, and accepted them.

VII

A SILVER entrée-dish was placed before Mabel, another before Sabre. Low Jinks removed her mistress's cover and Mr. Boom Bagshaw pushed aside a flower-vase to obtain a view.

"I don't eat salmon," he remarked. The vase was now between himself and Sabre. He again moved it, "Or cutlets."

Mabel exclaimed, "Oh, dear! Now, I got this salmon in specially from Tidborough."

"I'll have some of that ham," said Mr. Boom Bagshaw; and he arose sulkily and strolled to the sideboard where he rather sulkily cut from a ham in thick wedges. The house was clearly his house.

He addressed himself to Mabel. "Now, in a very few weeks you'll no longer have to get things from Tidborough, Mrs. Sabre—salmon or anything else. The shops in Market Square are going the minute they're completed. I got a couple of fishmongers only yesterday."

He spoke as if he had shot a brace of fishmongers and slung them over his shoulder and flung them into Market Square. Market Square was that portion of the Garden Home designed for the shopping center.

"Two!" said Mabel.

"Two. I encourage competition. No one is going to sleep in the Garden Home."

"What will all the bedrooms be used for then?" Sabre inquired.

Mr. Boom Bagshaw, who was eating his ham with a fork only, holding it at its extremity in the tips of his fingers and occasionally flipping a piece of ham into his mouth and swallowing it without visible mastication, flipped another morsel and with his right hand moved three more vases which stood between himself and Sabre. He moved each deliberately and set it down with a slight thump, rather as if it were a chessman.

He directed the fork at Sabre and after an impressive moment spoke: "Now, listen, Sabre. I don't think you're quite alive to what it is that is growing up about you. Flippancy is out of place. I abominate flippancy." (Well, dash it, it's my house!" Sabre thought.) "This Garden Home is not a speculation. It's not a fad. It's not a joke. What is it? You're thinking it's a damned nuisance. You're right. It *is* a damned nuisance——"

Sabre began: "Well——"

"Now, listen, Sabre. It *is* a damned nuisance; and I put it to you that, when a [illegible] is discovered embedded in a solid

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mass of coal or stone, that coal or stone, when it was slowly forming about that toad, was a damned nuisance to the toad."

Sabre asked, "Well, am I going to be discovered embedded——"

"Now, listen, Sabre. Another man in my place would say he did not intend to be personal. I do intend to be personal. I always am personal. I say that this Garden Home is springing up about you and that you are not realizing what is happening. This Garden Home is going to enshrine life as it should be lived. More. It is going to make life be lived as it should be lived. Some one said to me the other day—the Duchess of Wearmouth; I was staying at Wearmouth Castle—that the Garden Home was going to be a sanctuary. I said 'Bah!' like that—'Bah.' I said 'every town, every city, every village is a sanctuary; and asleep in its sanctuary; and dead to life in its sanctuary; and dead to Christ in its sanctuary.' I said 'The Garden Home is not going to be a sanctuary, nor yet a sepulchre, nor yet a tomb. It is going to be a symbol, a signal, a shout.' More ham."

He paused, pushed his plate to one side, more as if it had bitten him than as if he desired more ham to be placed upon it, and looked around the room before him, sulkily, and exercising his chin.

Sabre had a vision of dense crowds of bishops in lawn sleeves, duchesses in Gainsborough hats, and herds of intensely fashionable rank and file, applauding vigorously. He could almost hear the applause. But how to deal with this man he never knew. He always felt he was about fourteen when Mr. Boom Bagshaw thus addressed him. He therefore said, "Great!" and Mabel murmured, "How splendid."

VIII

BUT Sabre's thought was, and it remained with him throughout the meal, acutely illustrated by the impressive monologs which Mr. Boom Bagshaw addressed to Mabel, and by her radiant responses, his thought was: "I simply can't get on with this chap—or with any of Mabel's crowd. They all make me feel like a kid. I can't answer them when they talk. They say things I've got ideas about but I never can explain my ideas to them. I never can argue my ideas with them. They've all got convictions and I believe I haven't any convictions. I've only got instincts and these convictions come down on instincts like a hammer on an egg."

Mr. Boom Bagshaw was saying: "And we shall have no poor in the Garden Home. No ugly streets. No mean surroundings. Uplift. Everywhere uplift."

There slipped out of Sabre aloud: "There you are. That's the kind of thing."

Mr. Boom Bagshaw, as if to disclose without fear precisely where he was, dismantled from between them the hedge of flowers which he had replaced, and looked sulkily across. "What kind of thing?"

Sabre had a vision of himself advancing an egg for Mr. Bagshaw's hammer. "About having no poor in the Garden Home. Isn't there something about the poor being always with us?"

"Certainly there is."

"In the Bible?"

"In the Bible. Do you know to whom it was addressed?"

Sabre admitted that he didn't.

"To Judas Iscariot." (Smash went the egg!)

Sabre said feebly—he *could* not handle his arguments—"Well, anyway, 'always with us'—there are you. If you're going to create a place where life is going to be lived as it should be lived I don't see how you're going to shut the poor out of it. Aren't they a part of life? They've got as much right to get away from mean streets and ugly surroundings as we have—and a jolly sight more need. Always with us. It doesn't matter tuppence whom it was said to."

"It happens," pronounced Mr. Boom Bagshaw, "to matter a great deal more than tuppence. It happens to knock the bottom clean out of your argument. It was addressed to the Iscariot because the Iscariot was trying to do just what you are trying to do. He was trying to make duty to the poor an excuse for grudging service to Christ. Now, listen, Sabre. If people thought a little less about their duty toward the poor and a little more about their duty toward themselves, they would be in a great deal fitter state to help their creatures poor or rich. That is what the Garden Home is to do for those who live in it and that is what the Garden Home is *going* to do."

He stabbed sharply with the butt of a dessert knife on the dessert plate which had just been placed before him. The plate split neatly into exact halves. He gazed at them sulkily, put them aside, drew another plate before him, and remarked to Mabel: "When are you going to have your gate painted?"

IX

THE day ended in a blazing row.

In the afternoon Mr. Boom Bagshaw carried off Mabel to view the progress of the Garden Home. While they dallied over coffee at the luncheon table, Sabre was fidgeting for Bagshaw to be gone. He wanted to resume his sudden intention of remedying his normal relations with Mabel and the afternoon promised better than the intention had thus far seen. That niggling over the unexpectedness of his return—well, of course it was unexpected and upsetting of her household routine; but the unexpectedness was over and the letter incident over, and Mabel, thanks to her guest, delightfully mooded. Good, therefore, for the afternooon. When the dickens was this chap going?

Then Bagshaw, rising sulkily, "Well, you'd better come up and have a look round."

And Mabel animatedly, "I'd like to"; and to Sabre, "You won't care to come, Mark."

Sabre said "No, I won't."

X

THROUGHOUT dinner—Mabel returned only just in time to get ready for dinner—Sabre examined with dispassionate interest the exercise of trying to say certain words and being unable to say them. They conversed desultorily; in their usual habit. He told himself that he was speaking several hundred 'other' words; but the intractable words that he

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desired to utter would not be framed. He counted them on his fingers under the table. Only seven: "Well, how was the Garden Home looking?" Only seven. He could not say them. The incident they brought up rankled. He had come home to take a day off with her. She knew he was there at the luncheon table to take a day off with her. It had interested her so little, she had been so entirely indifferent to it, that she had not even expressed a wish he should so much as attend her on the inspection with Bagshaw. The more he thought of it the worse it rankled. She knew he was at home to be with her and she had deliberately walked off and left him. "Well, how was the Garden Home looking?" No. Not much. He couldn't.

MABEL left him sitting at the table with a cigaret. There came suddenly to his assistance in the fight with the stubborn seven, abreast of the thoughts in the office that had brought him home, a realization of her situation such as he had had that first night together in the house, eight years before: There she was in the morning-room, alone. She had given up her father's home for his home—and there she was: a happy afternoon behind her and no one to discuss it with. Just because he could not say "Well, how was the Garden Home looking?"

He thought: "I'm hateful." He got up vigorously and strode into the morning-room: "Well, how was the Home Garden looking?" His voice was bright and interested.

She was reading a magazine. She did not raise her eyes from the page: "Eh? Oh, very nice. Delightful."

"Tell us about it."

"What? Oh—yes." Her mind was in the magazine. She read on a moment. Then she laid the magazine on her lap and looked up. "The Garden Home? Yes—oh, yes. It was charming. It's simply springing up. You ought to have come."

He stretched himself in a big chair opposite her. He laughed. "Well, dash it, I like that. You didn't exactly implore me to."

She yawned. "Oh, well. I knew you wouldn't care about it." She yawned again: "Oh, dear. I'm tired. We must have walked miles, to and fro." She put down her hands to take up her magazine again. She clearly was not interested by his interest. But he thought, "Well, of course she's not. For her it's like eating something after it's got cold. Dinner was the time."

He said, "I expect you did—walk miles. Bagshaw all over it, I bet."

She did what he called "tighten herself." "Well, naturally, he's pleased—enthusiastic. He's done more than any one else to keep the idea going."

Sabre laughed. "I should say so! Marvelous person! What's he going to do about not wearing clerical dress when he has to wear gaiters?"

"What do you mean—*gaiters?*"

Signs of flying up. What on earth for? "Why, when he's a bishop. Don't you——"

She flew up. "I suppose that's some sneer!"

"Sneer! Rot. I mean it. A chap like Bagshaw's not going to be a parish priest all his life. He's out to be a bishop and he'll be a bishop. If he changed his mind and wanted to be a judge or a cabinet minister he'd be a judge or a cabinet minister. He's that sort."

"I knew you were sneering."

"Mabel, don't be silly. I'm not sneering. Bagshaw's a clever——"

"You say he's 'that sort.' That's a sneer." She put her hands on the arms of her chair and raised herself to sit upright. She spoke with extraordinary intensity. "Nearly everything you say to me or to my friends is a sneer. There's always something behind what you say. Other people notice it——"

"Other people?"

"Yes. Other people. They say you're sarcastic. That's just a polite way——"

He said, "Oh, come now, Mabel. Not sarcastic. I swear no one thinks I'm sarcastic. I promise you Bagshaw doesn't. Bagshaw thinks I'm a fool. A complete fool. Look at lunch!"

She caught him up. She was really angry. "Yes. Look at lunch. That's just what I mean. Any one that comes to the house, any of my friends, anything they say you must always take differently, always argue about. That's what I call sneering——"

He said flatly, "Well, that isn't sneering. Let's drop it."

She had no intention of dropping it. "It is sneering. They may not know it is. But I know it is."

XI

HE HAD the feeling that his anger would arise responsive to hers, as one beast calling defiance to another, if this continued. And he did not want it to arise. He had sometimes thought of anger as a savage beast chained within a man. It had helped him to control rising ill-temper. He thought of it now: of her anger. He had a vision of it prowling, as a dark beast among caves, challenging the night. He wished to retain the vision. His own anger, prowling also, would not respond while he retained the picture. It was prowling. It was suspicious. It would be mute while he watched it. While he watched it——

He pulled himself sharply to his feet. "Well, well," he said. "It's not meant to be sneering. Let's call it my unfortunate manner."

He stood before her half-smiling, his hands in his pockets, looking down at her.

She said: "Perhaps you're different with your friends. I hope you are. With your friends."

He caught a glint in her eye as she repeated the words. Its meaning did not occur to him.

He bantered: "Oh, I'm not as bad as all that. And anyway the friends are all the same friends. This place isn't so big."

Then that quick glint of her eye was explained—the flash before the discharge.

"Perhaps your friends are just coming back," she said. "Lady Tybar."

The vision of his dark anger broke away. Mute while he watched it, immediately it lifted its head and answered her own. "Look here—" he began; and stopped. "Look here," he said more quietly. "Don't begin that absurd business again."

"I don't think it is absurd."

"Well, you called it 'funny.'"

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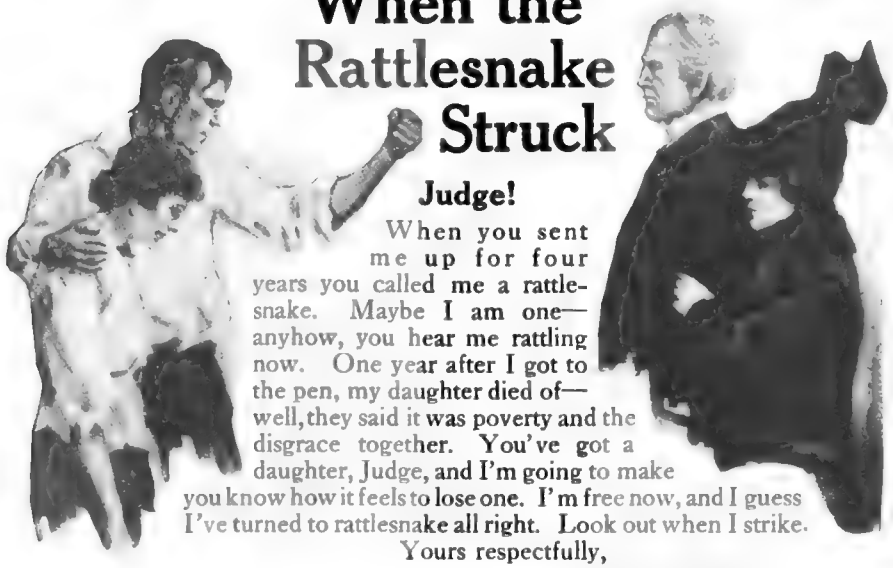

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When you sent me up for four years you called me a rattlesnake. Maybe I am one—anyhow, you hear me rattling now. One year after I got to the pen, my daughter died of—well, they said it was poverty and the disgrace together. You've got a daughter, Judge, and I'm going to make you know how it feels to lose one. I'm free now, and I guess I've turned to rattlesnake all right. Look out when I strike.

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She drew in her feet as if to arise. "Yes, and I think it's funny. All of it. I think you've been very funny all day to-day. Coming back like that!"

"I told you why I came back. To have a day off with you. Funny day off it's been! You're right there!"

"Yes, it *has* been a funny day off."

He thought, "My God, this bickering! Why don't I get out of the room?"

"Come back for a day off with me! It's a funny thing you came back just in time to get that letter! Before it was delivered! There! Now you know!"

He was purely amazed. He thought, and his amazement was such that, characteristically, his anger left him; he thought: "Well, of all the— !"

BUT she otherwise interpreted his astonishment. She thought she had made an advantage and she pressed it: "Perhaps you knew it was coming?"

"How on earth could I have known it was coming?"

She seemed to pause, to be considering. "She might have told you. You might have seen her."

He said, "As it happens I did see her. Not three hours before I came back."

She seemed disappointed. She said, "I know you did. We met Lord Tybar."

And he thought, "Good lord! She was trying to catch me."

She went on: "You never told me you'd met them. Wasn't that funny?"

"If you'd just think a little you'd see there was nothing funny about it. You found the letter so amazingly funny that, to tell you the truth, I'd had about enough of the Tybars."

"I dare say you have—with me. Perhaps you'll tell me this—would you have told me about the letter if I hadn't seen you get it?"

He thought before he answered and he answered out of his thoughts. He said slowly: "I—don't—believe—I—would. I wouldn't. I wouldn't because I'd have known perfectly well that you'd have thought it—funny."

XII

NO ANSWER he could have made could have more exasperated her. "I—don't—believe—I—would." Deliberation. Something incomprehensible to her going on in his mind, and as a result of it a statement that no one on earth (she felt) but he would have made. Any one else would have said boldly, blusteringly, "Of course I would have told you about the letter." She would have liked that. She would have disbelieved it and she could have said, and enjoyed saying, she disbelieved it. Or any one else would have said furiously, "No, I'm damned if I'd have shown you the letter." She would have liked that. It would have affirmed her suspicions that there was "something in it"; and she wished her suspicions to be affirmed. It would have been something definite. Something justifiably incentive of anger, of resentment, of jealousy. Something she could understand.

For she did not understand her husband. That was her grievance against him. She never had understood him. That den incident in the very earliest days of their marriage had been an intimation of a way

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of looking at things that to her was entirely and exasperatingly inexplicable; and since then, increasingly year by year, her understanding had failed to follow him He had retired farther and farther into himself. He lived in his mind and she could by no means penetrate into his mind. His ideas about things, his attitude toward things, were wholly and exasperatingly incomprehensible to her.

Things, in her expression, "went on" in his mind, and she could not understand what went on in his mind, and it exasperated her to know they were going on and that she could not understand them.

"I—don't—believe—I—would."

It was as if he had said, "You can't understand a letter like this. There's nothing in it to understand. And that's just what you can't understand. Look here, you see my head. I'm in there. You can't come in. You don't know how to. I can't tell you how to. Nobody could tell you. And you wouldn't know what to make of it if you did get in."

Exasperating. Insufferable. Insupportable.

She could not express her feelings in words. She expressed them in action. She arose violently and left the room. The whole of her emotions she put into the slam of the door behind her. The ornaments shivered. A cup sprang off a bracket and dashed itself to pieces on the floor.

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The things we prize most dear—
Our youth, our loves, our hopes.
We clutch
With secret hand,
Ashamed,
The trivial gain we fancy at the hour,
And furtive steal away,
Thinking—
Poor, credulous fools!—
We shall redeem them soon
With ease.
Not so!
Ah, never so!
We can but glimpse them sometimes
From afar,
Through alien windows,
As the indifferent crowds drift by
Jostling our shabby shoulders—
Our fingers that once heedlessly
Held gifts beyond all price
Now closing with despair
On nothingness!

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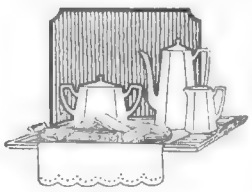

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I'LL SHOW YOU THE TOWN

(*Continued from page 83*)

kind of a bad fellow named Frank Arany. He used to belong to this club, but they threw him out three or four years ago. He was a tough citizen; he went up to Harlem and turned gunman. And he slipped them word to-night that he'd break up the dance. They had the door watched, but Frank and two of his crowd got in by the fire escape. I don't know that there'll be any trouble, but you wouldn't want——"

At a word from somebody else he disappeared into the crowd. I noticed a nervous undercurrent of whispering in the little groups around the tables. Over toward the door a knot of insolent youths had gathered, and the others had drawn away from them.

"Come on, Hazel," I said. "We're going up-town."

"If you go you'll go alone. I thrive on trouble. Come on, before the floor gets crowded."

"Not this time," I declared; but she was obstinate. A moment later we were swinging into the stride.

The dancers were few at first; most of the crowd hugged the tables, and some of the super-cautious had clustered around the door. But as the dance went on and nothing happened confidence returned slowly; the floor became crowded; Hazel and I danced along the farther wall, past the cool draft from a window, toward the corner.

Somewhere behind us a single shot banged through the whining music, echoing back from ceiling and walls. The waltz ended in a discordant screech; another shot, and the party broke up in a hubbub of screams and shouting, the clatter of overturned tables, the rattle of flying footsteps.

As the stumbling, shouting crowd streamed past us toward the jammed doorway Hazel and I halted, clinging to each other. The fire-escape window was out of reach, but just ahead of us was the corner of the wall. I fairly flung her into it, covering her with my body, pushing her back into the angle just as a bullet slapped the plaster above us. The fusillade of shots had drowned all other noises; I clutched her tense, muscular shoulders and held her panting in the corner, my body shielding her as I looked into her startled eyes.

"No, no!" she cried. "Alec! Don't!"

The revolvers rattled behind us; she caught my shoulders and tried to pull me away, to pull me into the corner, behind her.

"ALEC!" Her elbows pressed against my chest; she wrenched frantically at my arms, but I held her fast. "Alec! Please! You'll be shot! Oh! Oh!"

"Stand still, you little fool!"

Her eyes blazed into mine with helpless, defiant rage; but full of something else that shone through the rage and the defiance—a desperately frightened fondness, an agonized yearning.

My heart thumped louder than the pistol shots. For a moment we looked at each other in joyous, incredulous, rather frightened amazement; then I lifted her up and kissed her. The fingers that had gripped my shoulders pulled my head down, and we clung to each other in the corner of the wall, both of us crying a little and laughing a little, her face buried in my shoulder, her body protected by mine.

Chapter Seventeen

Edith Meets Her Match

SOME time afterward Hazel raised her flushed face and smiled at me.

"Did you know the battle was over?" she whispered.

It occurred to me then that the noise of firing had stopped. We turned and looked about a room full of drifting wreaths of smoke—a room three-fourths empty, with blue-coated policemen moving about in the crowd at the doorway, stilling the tumult with harsh, determined voices.

"You're not going to get mixed up in that," I said. "There's no need of getting in the papers again so soon. Now's our time for a getaway. Try the window."

It opened on the fire-escape, a fire-escape which went down into ill-smelling darkness. Hazel drew back.

"No, Alec. I don't like it."

"Quick!" I whispered, as a policeman called something at us across the room. But she still held back.

"I dislike to pull any movie stuff," I observed, "but if you're going to be stubborn——"

With one arm about her waist and the other under her knees I swept her up off the floor and clambered out on the iron-barred platform. She stirred unsteadily once or twice, but I tightened my grip, and she quieted and lay submissive as I carried her down the narrow ladder. She was no light load, but somehow we made it, aided by her steadying hand on the guard-rail. Down the ladder, let down from the lowest platform—the ladder by which the disturbers had come into the hall—through a black courtyard along the rear of a row of tenements, where we stumbled now and again over garbage-cans and broken boxes as we made our way slowly hand in hand toward the yellow glare above the wall ahead; and then squeezing through a narrow passage and out into the glowing, tumultuous street.

"Let's get out of this," she said dully, slipping her hand through my arm. We began to worm our way through the crowd toward the elevated. She kept step with me, silent, her eyes downcast, now and again unable to control her trembling. As for me, I was still under the spell of that embrace in the corner; it was some time before cold reason reminded me that I'd fallen in love with a girl worth twelve million dollars, and, still worse, that I'd made a girl worth twelve million dollars, a girl only nineteen years old, a girl engaged to another man, a girl who had been expressly put in my care, fall in love with me. No Deupree had ever done that before.

And then the crowds and the lights were left behind us, and we turned a corner into the Bowery—the Bowery at midnight, silent but for the elevated trains rumbling overhead, dark but for the arc-lights and the illuminated window of a lunch-counter a little farther down. Before us was the darkened front of a second-hand furniture store, and by the door a big empty packing-case on which we sat down, side by side,

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swinging our feet and looking anywhere but at each other. There was a great deal that I wanted to say, but when I tried to say it it collided with the things that it was my moral duty to say; so I said nothing.

At last Hazel reached out her hand and squeezed mine; and there was something about that warm, shivering clasp that shot new life all through me.

"Alec, will you marry me?"

"Oh, my dear! I love you so much, but I—shouldn't."

"Oh, shush!" she said scornfully. "I suppose you had to say that once to clear your conscience; but now that you've got it off your mind— Are you afraid to marry a rich girl?"

"I'm so crazy about you," I told her, "that a hundred million wouldn't make any difference. But Hazel dear, you're only nineteen. And we've known each other about a week. It wouldn't be fair to let your youth and inexperience——"

She laughed softly.

"You needn't worry about my youth and inexperience. Why, Alec, don't you think I *know*? I've been engaged three times, and I guess I can tell the difference."

"But you're engaged now!"

"Never mind that; I'll fix Kenneth. Oh, I supposed you'd be foolish at first: with so much money I knew I'd have to ask you. But I don't want to have to ask you t-twice——"

She didn't.

THAT was a magic evening; and the magic was still there when I called her on the telephone the next morning and felt my heart thump at the refreshing, lazy tenderness of her greeting.

"Are you just up?" she asked. "Then you're ahead of me. I tell you what—Sarah's still doctoring her throat, and I don't think she'll be up this morning. So I haven't told her anything that would, give her a temperature, and you can come down and have breakfast with me. Will you?"

I found a table set for two in her big tapestried sitting-room; and she met me, smiling, in a lacy blue negligée and a foolish little ribboned cap.

"I don't suppose this is a bit proper," she apologized, "but I was lazy, and since it was you——"

A familiar remark, but it had lost its power to grieve me.

That was a sporadic and intermittent breakfast; and not till it was over, and we were side by side on a settee by the window, watching the sunshine in the park, did we begin to be depressed by the impending routine of betrothal and marriage.

"I wish we could keep it a secret just for us two," she confessed. "I suppose we'll have to begin telling people right away."

"I don't mind it," I said. "A man always wants to hunt somebody up and boast about it. If I hadn't been coming down here to breakfast I'd probably have waked Bonner up and let him watch me gloat."

"I'll have to tell Sarah, of course. And that will mean a pitched battle. But I can always beat Sarah at the show-down. Anyway, she did us a good turn, though she doesn't know it; if she hadn't taken such an awful dislike to you I mightn't have got interested in you—so soon. And you'll have to tell Mrs. Torrey."

"Yes," I groaned; "and that will be

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another pitched battle. Edith thinks it's a mésalliance for a Deupree to marry anybody. And she'll have nobody left to run her errands. And she'll certainly be furious at me for taking advantage of your youth and inexperience. After all, your income is about three hundred times as big as mine, and she'd expressly put me in charge of you to keep the wolves away. I promised her I'd take care of you."

"Well!" said Hazel. "Aren't you going to take care of me? Though if anybody in our household needs taking care of it's you. And, of course, there's your friend Lucile."

"Oh, why did you remind me of Lucile? I haven't thought of her since yesterday morning."

"Have you tied yourself up, or anything—anything you can't get out of?"

"No," I said, "I haven't. And even if I had, I'd get out of it."

She laughed.

"But how about Kenneth?" I asked. "Can you get out of it?"

"Well, Alec"—and she picked up my hand and began to play with it—"the truth is, I did get out of it. I sent him a wireless the other night, after our dinner up the river. And then last night at Long Beach, I got to thinking that maybe you were tied up with Lucile and didn't want to be untied, and I—I felt like the devil. Good thing we ran into that shooting, wasn't it?"

"Then Kenneth is disposed of?"

"Well, I haven't heard from him, but it will be all right. You see, it—it was never so terribly serious, I suppose. Only everybody I knew was getting married or engaged to somebody just back from the war, and Kenneth and I had been pretty good friends, and we kind of caught the infection—like the flu, you know. It might not have held anyhow; and I don't think he'll mind. And I don't care if he does!"

That remark called for action, and I did what was appropriate. And presently, snuggled against my shoulder, she came back to Lucile.

"Just what are you in for?"

"Well, I promised to help her find a place to live, and introduce her to people, and put up some money for her business if she can't find any anywhere else."

"Is that all?"

"That's all."

"THEN I came along just in time," Hazel meditated. "Another week and heaven knows where you'd have been! But we can handle all of that. As far as a place to live is concerned, I think the Susan B. Anthony is an ideal place for her to live. And you and I and Mrs. Torrey can introduce her to our friends, and give her advice; and I've got more money than I know what to do with, so I can back her business. We can make it a sort of family matter."

"You little devil!" I laughed. "Do you think she'd take money from you?"

"I'm sure I don't see why she shouldn't. And I know one thing—she'll never take any more from you. I've got something to say about what you do with your money after this. Please don't think I'm jealous, Alec, or that I don't appreciate what a hard time she's had. I know she must be a dear little girl"—this from Hazel, who was only about ten years younger— "and I do feel sorry for her. And I want you to keep all your obligations. But it seems to me that you and I are under an obligation to each other that has the right of way."

"There's no doubt about that," I agreed.

"Of course not. Honestly, Alec, it's time somebody took charge of your kindly impulses and kept you out of mischief."

And when I looked into her clear, sweet eyes, with a little flicker of private laughter down in their depths, and a caressing fondness glowing through it, I knew that I had made a good bargain; that I was done with being the faithful friend, the dependable person, the brotherly recipient of confidences; that never again would a weary but sisterly head drop on my shoulder—and that I didn't care.

Our party broke up rather suddenly when the sound of footsteps in the farther rooms of the suite warned us that Sarah was awake and stirring.

"I DON'T think you'd better meet Sarah just now," Hazel advised. "There's going to be trouble, and you'd better leave me to handle her. You get things squared up with the Pembertons, and break the news to Mrs. Torrey; and if she's any kind of a person she'll ask us to tea and give us her blessing. Run, now, here comes Sarah. No—please. Please, Alec—she mustn't catch us. Well, one more . . . There! Good-by."

She pushed me out into the corridor just as Sarah, in wrappered unkemptness, appeared at the inner door and raised her arms to high heaven in horror. And the ghosts of the Gaylords rejoiced at the undependable spectacle presented to a passing chambermaid—an excited young man thrust out of an apartment by a pretty girl in negligée, while a gaunt and elderly female waved her arms and shouted invective behind them.

I ought to have gone to see Edith at once, I suppose; but frankly, I didn't have the courage. The idea of facing the high priestess of the Deupree family cult, and telling her not only that I was going to marry one of the daughters of men, but that I was appropriating the very girl whom she had particularly charged me to preserve for a proper career and a suitable alliance—this was something that needed much thinking over. I ought to be firm; I'd have to be firm; but I wasn't sure that it would be much use. Edith could be firm herself, and since, for all she knew, Hazel and I had met only once or twice—the information would be something of a shock.

I'd have to tell her some time; but at eleven o'clock I thought I'd do it at noon; and at noon I thought one o'clock would be better; and at one o'clock I felt that Edith's mood would be more propitious after lunch. In the meantime I called up Lucile.

The ankle was quite well, it appeared, and Frank had been there that morning.

"Oh, he's so changed," she rhapsodized. "I never saw a man change so much as he has in these few days. I think he must have missed me. And—listen, Alec: he doesn't object at all to my starting in business; only he thinks it would be better for me to do it in Chicago. What do you think?"

"It must be admitted," I said, "that you already have a large and prosperous acquaintance in Chicago."

"Of course they come to New York to buy things, but if I had a shop they'd know everything was just right. Oh, and this is the most amazing! What do you think? He wants to put up the money for me himself. What do you think of that? Do you think I'd better let him, or would you rather——"

"I think you'd better let him," I advised. "His business acumen ought to be of great value."

"It would look better, too, don't you think? So those women you told me about—who were they? The ones you said might put some money in it."

"My cousin, Mrs. Torrey, and Hazel Deming."

"Who's Hazel Deming? You're always talking about Hazel Deming, and I never——"

"Why, Hazel Deming— Hazel Deming is the girl I'm going to marry."

"Oh!" said Lucile. "You didn't tell me. When are you going to be married?"

"Some time next month," I predicted recklessly.

"Well, I hope you'll be very, very happy. And you'll always be awfully good to her, won't you, Alec? I'm sorry I didn't meet her at your tea that day; I could have told her lots of things— But you'll come and see me and tell me all about her, won't you? And some night I want you to bring her to dinner with Frank and me."

"Frank and you?" I exploded. "You haven't got Frank in the Susan B. Anthony?"

"Of course not. I'm joining him at the Ritz this afternoon."

I couldn't help a gnawing curiosity as to whether she'd decided to do that before I told her my news, but I put that curiosity out of my thoughts as well as I could. Speculation of that sort was an unseemly recreation for a young man who was going to be married.

At any rate, that conversation cheered me up so much that after lunch I went forth and called on Edith. I found her worrying about the proper clothes for the journey to China; but she forget that when I told her, as casually as I could manage it, that Hazel and I were going to be married.

"*What* did you say?" she gasped, sitting up on the chaise longue where she had been reclining languidly, and looking me over in the hope of finding signs of dementia.

"I said that Hazel and I are engaged. We're going to be married."

"Hazel who?" she gurgled with a last despairing clutch at flitting hope.

"Hazel Deming. The same. The one you have in mind."

"What do you mean? Hazel Deming? You? Why, you've hardly met her."

"Oh, we've met several times——"

"You've known her only a week!"

"TRUE," I said, "but I can't understand now why I didn't ask her to marry me the first day we met."

"But I left her in your care! I told you to look after her, and see that——"

"She is still in my care," I said with some severity. "I am going to make public profession, before long, of my intention to love, honor and cherish her. She'll be taken care of."

"I left you—you promised me—to see that she didn't do anything foolish; that she didn't yield to some passing impulse and ruin her life. I thought you had some spark of honor."

"Your remarks," I pointed out, "could hardly be construed as complimentary to

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me. You seem to feel that in promising to marry me she is doing something foolish. You suggest that I am going to ruin her life. And you even intimate that I have no spark of honor. Now, remember, I'm a Deupree——"

"That's what makes it so infamous!" she cried. "You, a Deupree! Of course I thought I could trust you. Of course I thought you'd realize your position and her position, and the need of keeping the girl from some reckless step. And you might at least have remembered your promise to me. It's the first time a Deupree ever— Well, it wasn't a Deupree, that's all. It was that wild Kentucky blood cropping out in you——"

"Alec, Alec! You, of all men! I thought you were safe."

"Well, who ever told you I was safe?" I demanded. "I am alive, to say the least, and I couldn't help going crazy about Hazel."

"No Deupree ever went crazy, as you call it, about a woman before."

"Then it's about time that some of them came to life. What's the matter with this match? Hazel and I are young, and she at least is sensible. If she happens to have a lot of money, so much the better; a professor needs it."

"But she— Her people were very solid persons, of course; her father was a very able business man. But they're nobody."

"Then my ancient lineage ought to be a fair exchange for her twelve million."

"YOU needn't adopt a tone of flippancy. She's no wife for you, and you are certainly not the husband for her."

"In brief, neither of us is good enough for the other."

"Don't be foolish. What's going to become of your book?"

"Oh, yes," I said nervously. "That's so. What is going to become of it?"

"Yes, indeed," said Edith. "What is? Just when you'd at last found yourself and decided to live up to the family traditions—"

"Edith," I said solemnly, "if you ever dare to mention the family traditions to me again I'll throw a chair at you. I'm through with this stuff about the family. It's been the curse of my life. Now as to that book, I'm going to write it some time. And I'm going to get a full professorship, some time. If I don't write the one and get the other this year, I'll do it later. Hazel comes first."

"There's no use trying to make you understand anything in your present state," she snapped. "I don't intend to argue. But— Oh, don't you see? Hazel is a dear little girl, and she has wonderful possibilities. But she needs development. And for you to take advantage of a moment of emotional folly and change the whole channel of her life——"

"Who dug this channel that you speak of?" I interrupted. "The sad truth, Edith, is that this whole affair is none of your business, and that you're only sore because we know it's none of your business. If you'd happened to have the bright idea of marrying me off to Hazel you'd be delighted with the match, but you don't like to have us think for ourselves."

"None of my business, indeed! Oh, I suppose you didn't mean any harm; but you ought to have known better. Hazel

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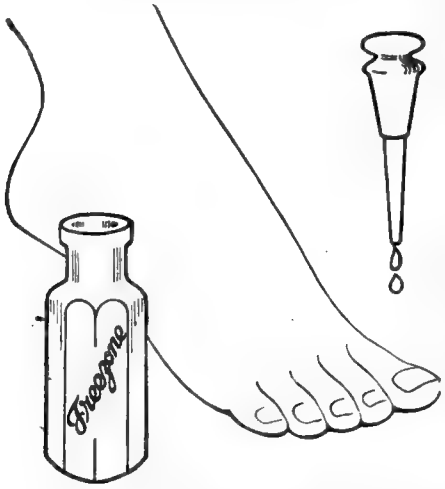

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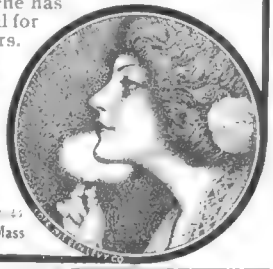

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can't be blamed; she's only a child. I suppose when a man kissed her for the first time in her life she lost her head. But you ought to have known enough not to kiss her.

"And where was that woman—Hazel's companion? What was she doing all this time? This is her fault. If she'd been any sort of person fit to look after the girl, this would never have happened. Well, I'll get rid of her, and I'll do it to-day. This will have to be stopped."

She jabbed several bells here and there, and a maid or two presently appeared with coats and hats, and remarks to the effect that the car had been ordered.

"Where do you think you're going?" I asked.

"I'M GOING to the Plaza," she said angrily, "and you're coming with me. This foolishness isn't going any further. I have a duty to Hazel and a duty to you; and I propose to do my duty, even if nobody else does."

I suppose I should have done something. But I'd seen Edith like this before, and there was nothing to do but let her blow off steam. Besides, I'd been in subjection to her for so long that nothing I might have said would have had any moral effect. Perhaps Hazel could do something by diplomacy.

"We were hoping you'd be nice about it, and ask us to tea," I suggested. "But if you insist——"

"I most certainly insist. Duty comes first with me."

We must have been a depressing sight when we finally got to Hazel's apartment and found her shiningly happy, but rather uncertain. Poor girl, she didn't know anybody in town, and in a great moment like this, when she needed the moral support of some woman, I suppose Edith must have appeared to her as the ambassador of the public opinion which would bless our union.

There was Sarah, of course, a visibly chastened Sarah, who greeted us in a grave voice from which the evidences of tonsilitis were strangely missing; but Sarah didn't count as much as Edith, so Hazel was rather shocked when Edith, after sweeping forward and catching her hands, and kissing her on both cheeks, and in general behaving as one who welcomes a bride-to-be into the family, dropped her hands and drew back and said sadly:

"My poor child, I'm sorry, but this will never do. Alec told me that in a moment of thoughtlessness you two had been foolish enough to engage yourselves to each other. No doubt you're fond of Alec, and he of you; but of course anything like that is out of the question. You'll have to break it off."

"Why?" asked Hazel, sitting down comfortably on a cushioned settee and crossing her knees.

"Why? My dear! Your youth—your inexperience—Alec's position—everything. You're entirely unsuited to each other. He has every prospect of a brilliant career; he shouldn't marry for years yet, and when he does, he should marry some older person. And certainly not a girl of your immense wealth."

"I won't hurt his career."

"You will have to take my more mature judgment on that. And he will certainly stand in your way."

"Really, Mrs. Torrey, I don't see that it's any of your business."

"If your parents were living," said Edith, controlling herself with some difficulty in the presence of this manifestation of ingratitude, "it would not be my place to tell you this. But in the circumstances my duty is plain, and I intend to do it. Please don't think I blame you or that I am unsympathetic; but young girls are apt to be impulsive, to want things that an older judgment recognizes as unwise. You'll forget this very soon. Now you won't think that I'm actuated by a desire for anything but your own good, when I say this——"

"Alec," Hazel interrupted, "has she told you all this? And what did you say to her?"

"Oh, I let her rave," I explained. "I'm used to it."

"Well, I'm not going to let her rave," said Hazel fierily, "and I don't propose to begin to get used to it. Mrs. Torrey, because you tried to be as nice to me as you knew how when I came to a strange town, and because you knew my father and mother, and because I needed an older woman to tell me things now and then, I thought I'd let you be a kind of a general manager of this affair. You'd introduced us, and been nice to us; and I thought, since you'd never had a daughter of your own, you might like to manage a girl's wedding, and maybe have me married from your apartment, or your church. I even thought you'd like to see me safely married to Alec, somebody you knew all about. Goodness knows I'm like any other girl; I'd like to be married with fuss and frills and orange-blossoms and a veil and bridesmaids and rice, and all the rest of it. And I was foolish enough to think that you might like to run the thing—sort of give us a benediction to make it regular, and let people think you'd made the match. We'll let you do it yet, if you'll be nice. But if you go on talking like this we'll get into my car and go down to the City Hall this afternoon and get an alderman to marry us, and then pack up a couple of suitcases and sort of poke around and have a honeymoon wherever the car takes us. Wouldn't you like that, Alec? I think it would be fun.

"OF COURSE there'd probably be a lot in the papers about the elopement of the twelve-million-dollar beauty, the daughter of Harmon Torrey's partner, with Mrs. Harmon Torrey's cousin, so maybe people would still think you'd made the match and were afraid to say so—sort of done a little fortune-hunting for your family. Perhaps it would be more fun to do that. I hate to think of waiting—don't you, Alec?"

This was my cue to sit down beside Hazel and slip an arm around her, and give her a hug that must have heartened her considerably as she and Edith exchanged a few bayonet-thrust glances. Only a few, for Edith had met her match. In a moment her eyes dropped; and then, because she knew she was beaten, and had to take it out on somebody, she turned to Sarah, who had been listening in enigmatic silence.

"What have you been doing all this time, I'd like to know? You hold your job because you're supposed to be devoted to Hazel, and yet you let her get herself engaged to a silly boy she hasn't known a week——"

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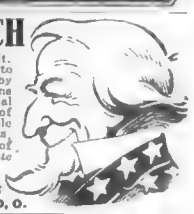

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"Don't blame it on Sarah," Hazel laughed. "She did all she could to prevent it. She took an awful dislike to Alec from the start, and used to tell me he was a lounge-lizard, and a fortune-hunter, and a gay Lothario, and goodness knows what. She did her best. Only she got sick at a convenient time."

"Sick!" Edith declaimed. "Sick! What right did she have to be sick?"

"Oh, be gentle," Hazel implored. "I've just given her an awful raking myself—haven't I, Sarah?"

"Yes!" said the dragon woman, rising with the light of battle in her eye. "And I stood it, as I'd stand more from Ella Deming's child. But I won't take anything from you, Mis' Torrey. I'm goin' to say a few things here and now that I hope you'll all remember; and then I'm goin' to pack my clothes and go back to Tonopah. I can make my own livin'; I don't have to work for nobody. I did try to keep Hazel from seein' this young man; I did tell her he was a fortune-hunter, and that he didn't look like he was any better than he ought to be. And I did get sick just in time to give 'em a chance to get together. An' I done it all with a purpose.

"I promised Ella Deming on her dyin' bed. 'Sarah,' she says to me, 'I want that you should look after my baby. I want you to see that she marries some good man that'll make her happy.' An' I says to her, 'Ella,' I says, 'I'll take care of the child an' see that she gets fixed right.' I didn't know then that she'd ever have any twelve million dollars or want to live in New York, but I reckon I'd a-promised anyway. We was always right good friends, me an' Mis' Deming.

"WHEN we come to this wicked city, where an innocent girl ain't got much chance so far as I can see, I seen I was goin' to have to keep my eyes open. An' then this young Doctor Deupree come along, an' I thought he was the likeliest one I'd seen. He's got a good face, an' anybody can see he's been raised right.

"But I knowed the child pretty well by that time, and I knowed that the best way to make her want anything was to tell her she oughtn't to have it. So I begun warnin' her against this young man, an' pretendin' to try an' keep her away from him. She's had many a laugh, she has, thinkin' how she was gettin' around me; and all the time I was fixin' it just that way.

"Then after they'd been thrown together enough to tell whether they liked each other or not, I thought I'd lay off and let them do the rest. So I pretended I had the quinsy an' let Hazel get out and go to him, an' they flopped right into each other's arms. An' I hope they stay there; I think they're a right good-lookin' couple. The good Lord knows, Mis' Torrey, I ain't one to fly in the face of Nature; an' when these two young things at the matin' age turn right to each other as natural as they have it'll take somebody with more nerve than you've got to keep them apart, and somebody with less sense than I've got. An' now I've done my duty by Ella Deming; and I'm goin' to leave this wicked city, this sink of iniquity, with its champagne suppers and its tango pirates and its great white ways, and I'm goin' back to Tonopah. I run a boardin' house once before an' had the most genteel trade in town, an' made

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a good livin'; and I can do it again. I reckon the child is safe."

In the awesome and cavernous silence that followed these remarks I presently became aware that Hazel and I were clutching each other with a vigor perhaps unwarranted in a couple who had been brought together by such Machiavellian strategy. For my self-respect had received a heavy blow. Sarah, who had flattered me beyond measure by regarding me as bold and bad and untrustworthy, a dangerous and unfit companion for an innocent girl, had brazenly betrayed me. I was unmasked before the girl who of all people ought to have regarded me as romantic and dangerous, in all my spotless, hopeless innocence.

"Do you still like me?" I asked her nervously. Before the eyes of Edith and Sarah she pulled my face down to hers.

"I love you," she whispered. "You old devil!"

There was nothing more to be said after that, and of course Edith said it.

"But twelve million dollars!" she exclaimed hopelessly. "What in the world are you two innocents ever going to do with so much money?"

"Oh, I expect we can find something to do with it," Hazel assured her. "For one thing, I'm going to endow Sarah, so she won't have to run any more boarding-houses unless she does it for fun. And then I was thinking this morning—what was it you wanted for your college, Alec? A women's dormitory, and a memorial gateway, and a quarter of a million dollars for the endowment fund——"

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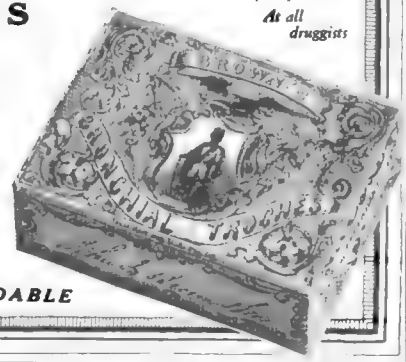

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Up from some flower-sweet valley
Steals the fiddling gipsy, Night.

He plays—and the small stars gather
And dance to his music's lure
And wild wood-things, fear-haunted,
Hear him and rest secure..

He plays—and men's hearts are lonely,
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IN RED *and* GOLD

(*Continued from page 61*)

"Yes—you are. Even more so than you can hope to perceive now."

The youth winced; but stood it. "Well suppose—just suppose that I might, one of these days, prove that I'm decent enough to ask her to be my wife. Oh, don't think for a minute that I don't understand all it means. I do. I tell you I'm starting again. I'm going to fight it out."

"That is fine," said Griggsby Doane, and looked squarely, gravely at the very young face. It was a white face, but good in outline; the forehead, particularly, was good. And the blue eyes now met his. "I believe you will fight it out. And I believe you have it in you to win."

"I'm going to try, Mr. Doane. But just suppose I do win. And suppose I win her. It's when I think of that, that I— I'll put it this way—to my friends, to everybody in New York, she'd be an oddity. A novelty, not much more. You know what most of them would think, in their hearts. Either they'd make an exception in her case—partly on my account at that—or else they'd look down on her. You know how they are about people that aren't—well, the same color that we are. Probably I couldn't live out here. The business is mainly in New York, of course. And she's such an enthusiastic American herself—she'd want to be there. Some, anyway, and she's got to be happy. She's like a flower to me, now; like an orchid. Oh, a thousand times more, but— What could I do? How could I plan? Oh, I'd fight for her quick enough. But you know our cold, rich Americans. They wouldn't let me fight. They'd just——"

"MY BOY," said Doane quietly, but with an authority that Rocky felt, "you can't plan that. You can do only one thing."

"What thing?"

"Stay here in China a year before you offer yourself to that lovely girl. Study the Chinese—their language, their philosophy, their art. A year will not advance you far, but it should be enough to show you where you yourself stand."

"A year——!"

"Listen to what I am going to try to tell you. Listen as thoughtfully as you can. First I must tell you this—the Chinese civilization has been—in certain aspects still remains—the finest the world has known. With one exception, doubtless."

"What exception?"

"The Grecian. You see, I have startled you."

"Well, I'm still sort of bewildered."

"Naturally. But try to think with me. The Chinese worked out their social philosophy long ago. They have lived through a great deal that we have only begun, from tribal struggles through conquest and imperialism and civil war to a sort of republicanism and a fine feeling for peace and justice. And then, when they had given up primitive desire for fighting, they were conquered by more primitive northern tribes—first the Mongols, and later the Manchus. The Manchus have been absorbed, have become more or less Chinese.

"And now a few more blunt facts that will further startle you. The Chinese are

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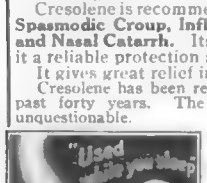

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"You will find Americans confusing them with the Japanese, whom they resemble only remotely. All that is finest in Japan—in art, literature, religion—came originally from China."

"You take my breath away," said Rocky slowly. But he was humble about it; and that was good.

"But listen, please. What I am trying to make clear to you is that in old Central China—in Hang Chow, and along this fertile Yangtze Valley, and northwest through the Great Plain to Kai Feng-fu and Sian-fu in Shensi—where the older people flourished—germinated the thought and the art, the humanity and the faith, that has been a source of culture to half the world during thousands of years.

"But you can not hope to understand this culture through Western eyes. For you will be looking out of a Western background. You must actually surrender your background. It is no good looking at a Chinese landscape or a portrait with eyes that have known only European painting. Can you see why? Because all through European painting runs the idea of copying nature—somehow, however subtly, however influenced by the nuances of color and light, copying. But the Chinese master never copied a landscape. He studied it, felt it, surrendered his soul to it, and then painted the fine emotion that resulted. And, remember this, he painted with a conscious technical skill as fine as that of Velasquez or Whistler or Monet. Often finer."

THE youth whistled softly. "Wait, Mr. Doane, please—the fact is, you're clean over my head. I—I don't know a thing about our painting, let alone theirs. You see I haven't put in much time at—" He stopped. His smooth young brows were knit in the effort to think along these new, puzzling channels. "But she would understand," he added, honestly, softly.

"Exactly! She would understand. That is what I am trying to make clear to you."

"But you're sort of—well, overwhelming me."

"My boy," said Doane, very kindly, "you could go back home, enter business, marry some attractive girl of your own blood who thinks no more deeply than yourself, whose culture is as thinly veneered as your own—forgive me. I am speaking blunt facts."

"Go on. I'm trying to understand."

"And find happiness, in the sense that we so carelessly use the word. But here you are, in China, proposing to offer your life to a Manchu princess. You do seem to see clearly that there would be difficulties. It is true that our people crudely feel themselves superior to this fine old race. As a matter of fact, one of the worthiest tasks left in the world is to explain East to West—to draw some part of this rich old background in with our own more limited background. But as it stands now, the current will be against you. So I say this—study China. Open your mind and heart to the beauty that is here for the taking. Try to look through the decadent surface of this tired old race and see the genius that still slumbers within. If, then, you find yourself in the new belief that their culture is in certain respects finer than ours—as I myself have been forced to believe—if you can go to Hui Fei humbly—then ask her to be your wife. For then there will be a chance that you can make her happy. Not otherwise."

DOANE stopped abruptly. His voice was rich with emotion. The boy was deeply stirred; and a moment later, when he felt a huge hand on his shoulder, he found it necessary to fight back the tears. The man seemed like a father; the sort of father he had never known.

"Don't ask her so long as a question remains in your mind. Defiance won't do—it must be faith, and knowledge. I can't let you take the life of that girl into your keeping on any other terms."

The odd emphasis of this speech passed quite by the deeply preoccupied young mind.

"You're right," he replied, brokenly. "I've got to wait. Everything that you say is true—I really haven't a thing in the world to offer. I'm an ignorant barbarian beside her."

"You have the great gift of youth," said Doane gently.

But a moment later Rocky broke out with—

"But Mr. Doane—how can I wait? She—after her father—they're going to take her away—make her marry somebody at Peking—somebody she doesn't even know——"

"I don't think they will succeed in that plan," said Doane very soberly.

"But why not? What can she do? A girl—alone——"

"There are tens of thousands of girls in China that have solved that problem."

"But I don't see——"

"You must still try to keep your mind open. You are treading on ground unknown to our race." A breathless quality crept into Doane's low-pitched voice; his eyes were fixed on the distant river bank. "I wonder if I can help you to understand. Death—the thought of death—is to them a very different thing——"

"Oh!" It was more a sharp indrawing of breath than an exclamation. "You don't mean that she would do that?"

Doane bowed his head.

"But she couldn't do a cowardly thing."

Doane brought himself, with difficulty, to utter the blunt word. "Suicide, in China, is not always cowardice. Often it is heroism—the holding to a fine standard."

"Oh no! It wouldn't ever——"

"Please! You are a Westerner. Your feelings are those of the younger—yes, the cruder half of the world. I must still ask you to try to believe that there can be other sorts of feelings." Again the great

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hand rested solidly on the young shoulder; and now, at last, the boy became slightly aware of the suffering in the heart of this older man. Though even now he could not grasp every implication. That human love might be a cause he did not perceive. But he sensed, warmly, the ripe experience and the compassionate spirit of the man.

"You have stepped rather impulsively into an old-world drama," Doane went quietly on, "into a tragedy, indeed. No one can say what the next developments will be. You can win, if at all, only by becoming yourself a fatalist. You must move with events. Certainly you can not force them."

"But I can take her away," cried the boy hotly; finishing, lamely, with "somehow."

"Against her will?"

"Well—surely——"

"She will not leave her father."

"But—oh, Mr. Doane——"

He fell silent. For a long time they sat without a word, side by side. Here and there about the junk sleepers awoke and moved about. A few of the women, forward, set up their wailing, but more quietly now. The craft headed in gradually toward the right bank, passing a yellow junk that was moored inshore and moving on some distance up-stream. At a short distance inland a brown-gray village nestled under a hillside.

"That junk passed us before we left the island," Rocky observed, gloomily making talk.

Doane's gaze followed his down-stream; then at a sound like distant thunder, he turned and listened.

"What's that?" asked the boy.

Doane looked up into the cloudless, blazing sky.

"That would be the guns at Hankow," he replied.

VI

THE lictors were landed first to seek carts in the village. Then all were taken ashore in the small boat. His Excellency smilingly, with unfailing poise, talked with Doane of the beauties of the river; even quoted his favorite Li Po, as his quiet eyes surveyed the hills that bordered the broad river:

"The birds have all flown to their trees,
The last, last, lovely cloud has drifted off,
But we never tire in our companionship—
The mountains and I."

The line of unpainted, springless carts, roofed with arched matting, yellow with the fine dust of the highway, moved, squeaking, off among the hills. Following close went the women and the servants. The junk swung deliberately out and off down the river.

Doane, declining a cart, walked beside that of his Excellency; Rocky Kane, deadly pale, his mouth set firmly, beside Miss Hui Fei. And so, through the peaceful countryside they came to the long brick wall and the heavily timbered gatehouse by the road, and, pausing there, heard very faintly the soft tinkling of the little bronze bells within. It was late afternoon. The shadows were long; and the evening birds were twittering among the leafy branches just within the wall.

Continued in the February EVERYBODY'S

The Choice

By Mary Siegrist

ALWAYS she follows me, this Being strange
And deep and still and wildly beautiful.
Sometimes she stretches arms and waits for me
Near the blown beauty of a child's tossed hair;
Sometimes she shudders near the burning glance
The beggar gives of glorious despair;
Sometimes she shines within the dark damp ways
Where His great poor grope on the filthy stairs—
There where the wide-eyed children dully swarm
And raise great eyes to where the light shines not;
Or where a bent gray organ-grinder lifts
The white prayer of his haunting melody.
Always she cries: "Interpret this to men
Or your small candle will let go its flame
And you will grope forever hungering
For a lost light." "Which shall it be?" I ask—
"The endless quest of her or the deep death
Upon the darkness? Let it be the quest
Of flying Beauty." When lo, now she stands
On a plumed wave that only knows the sea
And mocks and beckons from its foam-lipped crest,
While I stand mute and troubled on the shore
And plead with her: "I do not know the way;
The sea is stranger and the tide runs dark!"

But she stands pitiless. "Then lose the light!"
She cries again. A bird of darkness flies
And then—God's courage comes within the breast
And out I plunge . . . If I go down at last,
It shall be on full sea—on some bright wave,
Hearing her voice, great Beauty's—within sight
Of the lit candle that she holds for me.

Which is the Mother?

It is good health which keeps womanly beauty fresh. Cosmetics can only hide the traces of the years in a once pretty face.

Mothers who are still young at the age of forty can teach their daughters the value of a good aperient in keeping the blush of youth in their cheeks.

NR Tablets (a vegetable aperient) act pleasantly and naturally to clear the skin of blemishes and preserve a healthful, youthful appearance.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Wonderful DELTOR

DELTOR is a new and wonderful addition to Butterick Patterns which does for the skill, cleverness and artistry of your cutting, sewing and finishing what the pattern itself does for the style of your garment.

As the pattern enables you to reproduce in your garment the style-lines originated by a master-designer in some Paris or New York salon, so DELTOR enables you to reproduce, in the cutting of your goods for it, the dash and snap and accuracy of its original cutter; to reproduce the skilful precision and niceties of its original tailor in your sewing and making-up; and to reproduce in the finishing of its details those subtle touches, even the very individualities of method, of its original Paris or Fifth Avenue creator.

DELTOR is truly a way of supplying you now with practically a pattern for your fingers, to supplement the pattern for your goods. It removes the last difficulty from home sewing. It banishes the last tell-tale evidence of the made-at-home garment.

You may well ask, "What can this DELTOR be?"

In effect it is like this: Just imagine that when you open your Butterick Pattern to begin work, the master-cutter from the salon where the style originated were to appear at your side and say, "Wait, Madame; tell me first—of the materials and widths indicated on your pattern—which did you choose—40-inch? Very well; then the best way to lay your pattern out upon the goods is thus—put this piece here, and this piece there"—and so on until every piece of the pattern is laid down and pinned to the goods.

Imagine what a priceless help that would be!

It is exactly what DELTOR does. DELTOR shows it in graphic pictures, individually for every pattern and individually for each size and each view of the pattern, and specifically for each different width of goods suitable. And so clearly that you have nothing to do but follow the pictures in order to cut out your goods precisely as the expert New York or Paris cutter would cut them.

So, unlike your present hesitancy and worry over cutting into your goods even with the best of patterns, you now take your shears and cut without the slightest doubt of results. You have the satisfying surety that you are cutting so the grain or pattern of the fabric will run in every single piece in just the right direction, or at just the right angle, to insure harmonious and artistic matching of every detail in the finished garment.

A secret of the cutter's art, that, which is usually considered the distinguishing mark of only the high-class professional—but DELTOR makes it a certainty for you in your own work.

Then you have also the calm assurance that you are cutting your material in the absolutely most economical way. Because in DELTOR an expert is showing you his clever way of getting the full use out of every possible inch of goods, you not only waste not the fraction of a yard but you have to buy just that much less! And in these days, even an eighth or a quarter of a yard of almost any material is an important item, and even though you use an inexpensive fabric, this part of DELTOR will save at least the cost of the pattern. With some expensive materials, such as satins, silks, velvets, fur cloth and the like, you may easily *save two, three, even four dollars!*

Do you begin to see all that DELTOR means to you? Yet this is only a part of it. DELTOR does much more.

Imagine that with your material cut and the various pieces about you, just as you begin to hesitate as to what and where to begin, and to worry a little about making a mistake—imagine that just then appears the expert tailor who made up the original design of your pattern. Imagine his bringing all his experience to YOU and saying, "First, Madame, I take this piece, then that—now baste them here. So! Now take yonder piece—turn it under at the edge just this much—thus. Place it here—now take it to your machine and sew with a French seam just to this point—" and so on till every piece is in its own place to a nicety.

DELTOR, in simple pictures, shows each essential point. It leaves not a possibility for error, not a chance for a single amateurish touch. It renders even the most intricate and pernickity details, like the precise adjustment of a sleeve, or the dashing set of a collar, perfectly simple. It makes things

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come right the very first time—because, through DELTOR, a master is guiding your fingers at every important turn.

But there is more. With the making-up done, and your anxiety rising to have it LOOK dainty and clever—with no home-made crudity appearing—imagine, then, a clever little French seamstress, one of those indispensable factors of the great salons, in whose deft fingers an every-day needle or pair of shears performs feats as truly artistic as a painter's brush, and under whose skilful touch even an ordinary bow of ribbon acquires a personality of its own—imagine such a one now appearing at your side. "This little tuck, Madame," she says, "I would turn like this—so! Now with your needle—there! Stitch, stitch, stitch—it is done. Now this end of ribbon—it looks stiff—we must give it the character. Take it—so. Now with your shears—like this. Snip!—" and so on with each little finishing touch until your garment takes on the very PERSONALITY of a real Paris or Fifth Avenue creation!

That, in effect, is what DELTOR does.

And all so amazingly simple!

DELTOR is not a set of tedious instructions. It does not impose on you with technical terms that you must interpret for yourself, or give you mere broad generalities that you have first to understand and then apply for yourself to the particular work in hand. One of the remarkable things about DELTOR is that in just a very few simple pictures it makes every necessary movement as clear as A-B-C. This is because each new Butterick Pattern has its own individual DELTOR. The ESSENTIAL movements, and the essential movements only, of a master-craftsman—in cutting, making and finishing the very garment YOU are making, and the very same size of it—are given you in simple, graphic pictures, one at a time. You simply follow the pictures, one by one, and the accuracy, the skill, the experience, even the personal cleverness and ingenuity of the expert, reproduces itself naturally for you in your own work.

If you are already experienced in making your own clothes—even if you are indeed expert—DELTOR, by giving you a peep into the very inside secrets of the Paris and New York artists' ways, will unfold many new ideas to you and broaden your own capacity. But if you are totally lacking in experience, or doubtful of your own ability—just a bit worried, perhaps, about cutting into a nice piece of goods—then DELTOR will be a real wonder-worker for you. You will hardly believe your own fingers ever turned out such beautiful work.

Not since Butterick first invented the dress pattern itself has such an improvement in home sewing been devised as the DELTOR. Just as the pattern itself brings you the lines and drape of a New York or Paris style for your garment, so now the DELTOR brings you the personal methods and skill and art of the New York or Paris workshop, for your fingers.

Once you have experienced the pleasure and ease, and the pride in such results as you never dared to hope for before, that come automatically with the use of the Butterick Pattern with its accompanying DELTOR, you will wonder how you ever could have got along without it.

DELTOR, of course, like other improvements in dress patterns, is exclusive to Butterick Patterns. As Butterick invented the Dress pattern, which made good style possible for made-at-home garments, so now Butterick has invented DELTOR to make expert workmanship and the touch of Paris and New York art possible in all home sewing. DELTOR is patented throughout the world and can be had only with Butterick Patterns.

Beginning with January it will be a part of ALL Butterick Patterns, but even for the December styles it has been found possible at the last minute to provide a DELTOR for the leading coat and dress patterns.

With the introduction of the DELTOR, the amount of goods specified on each Butterick Pattern will be the amount found exact for the expert cutting method shown by the DELTOR, which naturally will be the least possible amount that any pattern could require, and less, in most cases, than ANY pattern would require without the economy of material made possible by the DELTOR. The coming of the DELTOR, therefore, is almost always bound to mean that you have to buy less goods for equal results than you ever did before with any pattern.

Butterick Patterns have always been found superior, because of accuracy and style, but with the coming of the DELTOR they are *essential* for the greatest economy, and are ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY for the most skilled, clever workmanship on your garment.

BUTTERICK

Style Leaders of the World

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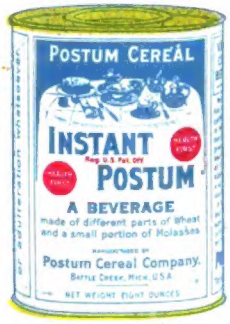

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